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Huskers Illustrated

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Volume 18, No. 8

SEPTEMBER 5, 1998 • \$2.95

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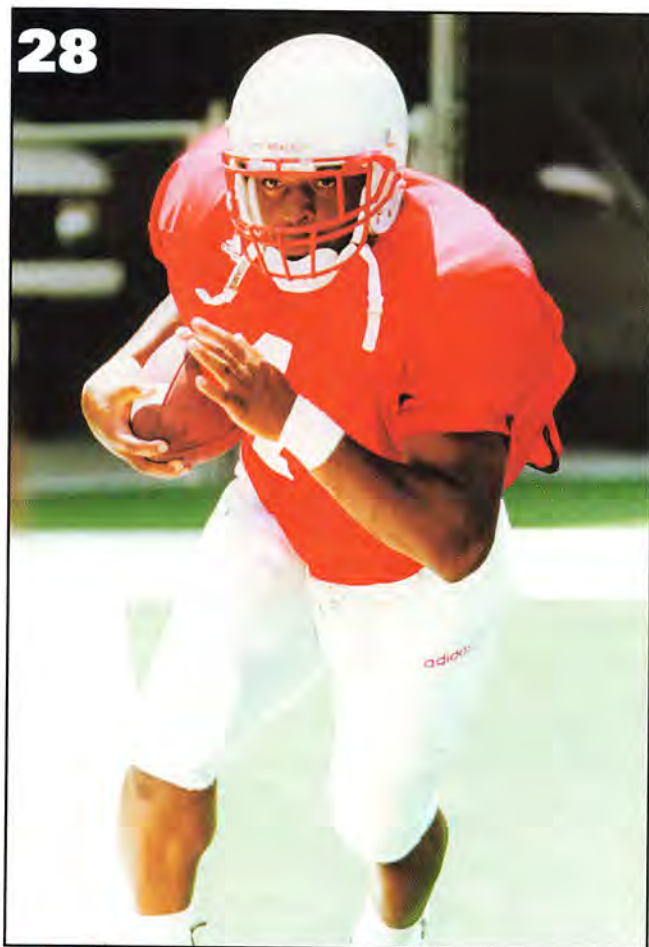
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Sure they look bored on the sideline and hardly break a sweat during practice, but Kris Brown and Bill Lafleur have gone to great lengths to break the stereotypes associated with their positions.

By Mike Babcock

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LETTERSTOTHEEDITOR

High Profiles

I really enjoy the in-depth features and player profiles included in the magazine. I will enjoy Cornhuskers' football even more this season because I feel like some of these players are friends of mine. There are lots of publications that talk about the X's and O's, which is fine, but I like think it is just as interesting to know what the players are like off the field. Thanks for the complete coverage of Nebraska football.

Steve Bloomquist
Springfield, Ill.

K-State Can Wait

I know that most Husker fans, myself included, have Nov. 14 circled on the calendar already. While this will no doubt be a great game, the Huskers will have several very tough games leading up to the game against the Wildcats. Texas A&M, Washington and Missouri all went to bowls last season and will be seeking some payback for last season. Texas and Louisiana Tech have Heisman candidates who can make life difficult for any opponent. Nebraska needs to be careful because the game with Kansas State won't mean as much if the Huskers slip up before they get there.

Jacob Fowler
Tulsa, Okla.

Husker Dedication

If anybody wonders why the Huskers are the dominant football program, they only need to look at the work ethic of the players. There is no vacation for Nebraska football players. They don't relax in the offseason and come back soft in the spring. Every single player knows what needs to be done to achieve their goal of a national title, then they go out and do it. If other teams worked this hard, maybe Nebraska wouldn't walk all over them.

Charlie McReynolds
Wichita, Kan.

WWF Bound

Wouldn't that be something if Sheldon Jackson added a heavyweight championship wrestling belt to go along with his national championship rings? "Chocolate Thunder" rules!

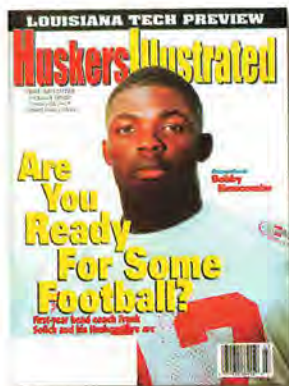
Tommy Abrams
Lincoln, Neb.

Basketball Blue Chip

Michael Bauer could not pick a better time to come to Nebraska to play basketball. The Cornhuskers hoopsters are starting to make a name for themselves

among the top programs. It's one thing to join a program that's already established as a national powerhouse, which Bauer could do; it's something totally different to help take a good team up to the top of the mountain, which is what he could do with Nebraska.

Tim Macnab
Cheyenne, Wyo.



Osborne's Roast

Coach Osborne's long-time friend and rival Bobby

Bowden was a perfect choice to roast Osborne. Bowden has had similar success over an extended period of time, just like Osborne. He has also won with class and dignity like Osborne. These two men are great for college football and it's wonderful to see them exhibit their respect for each other in this way.

Shirley Devay
Bloomington, Ind.

Women's Sports

Kudos for the coverage of women's soccer and volleyball. It's understandable for everyone to have Big Red football on the brain at this time of year, but there are other excellent athletic programs at Nebraska. The young women who participate in these sports work just as hard as the football players and deserve the space devoted to them in the magazine. Thank you for giving all of Nebraska's fine athletes their just due.

Janelle Martinez
Lincoln, Neb.

Recruiting Riddle

Here's a different take on the chicken and the egg question: Does Nebraska get great recruits because they win or do they win because they get great recruits?

Doug Simpson
Oklahoma City, Okla.

Got Something To Say?

Please send your comments and questions to: Letters, P.O. Box 83222, Lincoln, Neb. 68501. Or fax them to us at (972) 851-1720. We reserve the right to edit the letters for clarity, content and length. For those with electronic mail abilities, huskersedit@sportscom.com.

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Scott Bruhn



In The Blood

Fullback Joel Makovicka may be the latest, but he wasn't the first, or maybe even the last, to see action on the gridiron in the Cornhusker state

Husker fullback Joel Makovicka comes by his talent naturally. It's all in the family.

His brother, Jeff, was a Cornhusker letterman from 1992 to 1995, of course. And his dad, John, was an NAIA All-American halfback at Kearney State College as a senior in 1970.

John was inducted into the Nebraska Football Hall of Fame in 1996.

Makovicka's bloodlines can be traced even further, back to **Sylvester Shonka**, a three-year football letterman for Cornhusker teams coached by W.C. "King" Cole and E.O. "Jumbo" Stiehm.

Shonka was the uncle of John Makovicka's mother.

As a sophomore center in 1909, Shonka was an All-Missouri Valley Conference tackle for Cole's final team

in 1910 and again for Stiehm's first team in 1911. He played on teams that had a combined record of 15-5-4 and produced the two most lopsided victories in school history.

The 1910 team completed a 7-1-0 season by thumping Haskell Indian School, 119-0, on Thanksgiving, and the 1911 team opened with a resounding 117-0 victory against Kearney State.

Shonka was inducted into the Nebraska Football Hall of Fame in 1978.

Ray Prochaska, who was inducted into the Nebraska Football Hall of Fame in 1986, was a first cousin of John Makovicka's father. Ray, a three-year letterman for coach **Biff Jones**, was an All-Big Six end as a senior on the 1940 team that played in the Rose Bowl game, the Cornhuskers' first

bowl appearance.

Ray's brother, **George**, lettered for coach **Bill Glassford's** teams from 1950 to 1952.

Finally, **Dan Kobza**, John Makovicka's first cousin, lettered on **Bob Devaney's** 1967 and 1968 teams.

Joel knew about the family tradition before he followed Jeff by walking on at Nebraska following an outstanding eight-man career at East Butler High School. "My parents told me we've had relatives who played here," Joel said. "It's something I knew about before I ever got here."

"It was kind of a motivational thing, that the ability was in the family."

His dad, who went to East Butler High as well, began at Nebraska then transferred to Kearney State, where he also pitched

for the baseball team and ran hurdles on the track team.

John never pushed Joel or Jeff into athletics. "He just supported us and coached us if we chose that path," said Joel. "That's the way my mom is, too. They support us in whatever we do."

John downplayed his own distinguished athletic career when Joel and Jeff were in high school, according to Joel. "He's real humble," Joel said. "Whenever we would ask him about it, he would always tell us that he couldn't have played with us now, that we were a lot better athletes."

After trying for two seasons to make an NFL roster, Jeff returned to Nebraska to complete a degree in psychology. He graduated in August and wants to pursue a law degree, Joel said.

Jeff paved the way for his success, said Joel. The fact that Jeff was at Nebraska when he arrived is "why I got on the field as quickly as I did. Having somebody that close to you who's already here and knows what it takes, who

Having his brother, Jeff (above right), already on campus made fellow fullback Joel's transition from small-town football to Husker success much easier.

has played, there's no question I owe a lot of credit to him."

Cornhusker football games have become a family affair. "My family didn't miss a game last year, home or away," Joel said. "I'm really happy that they enjoy going and watching me play."

The Nebraska football team is like an extended family, according to John Makovicka. He and his wife, Connie, have talked

about traveling to one Cornhusker road game a season, even after Joel finishes. And there are two more Makovicka boys still at home, so who knows?

They haven't reached high school age yet. But maybe they'll follow Jeff and Joel.

If that's their choice, fine, John said. They won't be pushed, however.

One thing is certain, though: They have the bloodline. ■

Big, Agile And On The Average

THIS YEAR'S CORNHUSKER football team is physically comparable to those that won national championships in 1994, 1995 and 1997, according to the results of the annual strength and conditioning tests conducted before the start of two-a-day practices in early August.

The average weight of those who were tested was 234 pounds, which was equal to that of last season's team and the heaviest in school history, according to director of performance **Boyd Epley**.

The team average in the pro-agility run (:04.14) also was a record. "We're big, and we're very agile," Epley said in releasing the results.

In addition to the pro-agility run, players were tested in the vertical jump and the 10-yard dash. Nebraska does not test returning players in the 40-yard dash in the fall.

Sophomore I-back **Dan Alexander** scored the highest number of performance points in the three tests. Performance points are determined by factoring an athlete's weight into his test scores.

The 255-pound Alexander, for example, earned 997 points in the pro-agility run with a time of 3.88 seconds. The 997 points were the most ever earned by a Cornhusker in any test.

A score of 1,500 points in the three tests is considered excellent, according to Epley.

Alexander's total was 2,368. Sophomore rush end **Kyle Vanden Bosch** had the second-highest total, 2,196 points, and senior fullback **Joel Makovicka** had the third-highest total, 2,189 points.

The 6-foot-4 Vanden Bosch weighed in at 267 pounds.

Five other players totaled 2,000 or more points: strong-side linebacker **Brian Shaw**, middle linebacker **Jay Foreman**, rush ends **Aaron Wills** and **Chad Kelsay**, and weakside linebacker **Eric Johnson**.

Wide receiver **Kenny Cheatham** had the best vertical jump, 36.5 inches. Shaw had the fastest pro-agility run, 3.79 seconds. And Johnson had the fastest time in the 10-yard dash, 1.51 seconds.

Several players set position records for performance points in the pro-agility run, including Foreman, Wills, middle linebacker **Carlos Polk**, place-kicker **Kris Brown** and punter **Bill Lafleur**. ■

Michael Warren



Dan ALEXANDER

QUICK HITS

What's Happening In Nebraska Athletics?

CAPTAINS NAMED

For the second time in the last four seasons, the Cornhusker football team has five captains. Three are offensive players, and two are Nebraskans. They are fullback **Joel Makovicka** from Ulysses, Neb., by way of Brainard (East Butler); tight end **Sheldon Jackson** from Diamond Bar, Calif.; center **Josh Heskew** from Mustang, Okla.; rush end **Chad Kelsay** from Auburn, Neb.; and middle linebacker **Jay Foreman** from Eden Prairie, Minn. The captains, all seniors, were selected in a vote of the team.

First-year head coach **Frank Solich** has a unique perspective on what being a Cornhusker co-captain means. He was chosen as a co-captain as a senior at Nebraska in 1965.

"It meant a great deal," he said. "To have the confidence of your teammates, for them to put you out front as a leader of the team, I think, is tremendous. It makes a guy feel like he's not only a major part of the team but that he's got to do the things necessary to keep the team on track."

"Because there are responsibilities for a captain, and certainly the guys the players have selected as captains will be those type of guys. They'll do what's necessary to keep the team on track."

WHEN WITH ROME

Bobby Newcombe was a guest on the nationally syndicated **Jim Rome** radio show a week before the Louisiana Tech game. Newcombe was treated well by the often acerbic Rome.

"That kid's got his dome screwed on squarely," Rome told listeners.

Rome described the soft-spoken sophomore from Albuquerque, N.M., as arguably the most athletic quarterback ever at Nebraska and asked Newcombe if having a new head coach, an inexperienced offensive line and an inexperienced quarterback would cause a dropoff in the program.

"I don't think so," Newcombe replied.

Newcombe evaded Rome's attempt to draw him into discussing the Cornhuskers' game against Kansas State at Manhattan on Nov. 14. Nebraska was taking the season one game at a time, he said.

BRIEFLY NOTES

- Freshman rush end **Justin Smith** suffered a shoulder separation on the first day of varsity practice and was expected to be sidelined for as much as a month. Freshman tight end **Jon Bowling** also suffered a shoulder separation during practice a couple of days later.

- Dorrick Roy**, a tight end from Inglewood, Calif., and **Marcus Johnson**, an offensive lineman from Oceanside, Calif., were among the missing when the Cornhuskers assembled in August.

Both came to Nebraska as scholarship recruits, Roy in 1994 and Johnson in 1995.

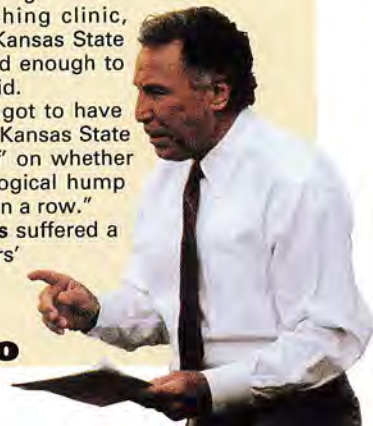
Roy transferred to Northern Iowa and Johnson has been given a medical redshirt.

- Mark this down. While visiting Lincoln to speak at a high school coaching clinic, ESPN's **Lee Corso** said of the Kansas State Wildcats: "I think they are good enough to beat Nebraska this year," he said.

"To beat Nebraska, you've got to have great defense. They have that. Kansas State is capable, but there's a big 'if' on whether they can get over the psychological hump of losing to Nebraska 30 years in a row."

- Cornerback **Khari Reynolds** suffered a mild ankle sprain in the Huskers' final practice in full pads prior to the Louisiana Tech game. ■

Lee Corso



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BIG 12 NEWS

Notes And Quotes From Around The League

It has been predicted by many that we will win the South Division. We recognize what those things are at this time of year — just predictions. I have said for many years that this time of the year when groups get together and start discussing who will win championships, I hope we are one of those teams. We are glad to be in that group.

— **R.C. Slocum, Texas A&M head coach**

The start of the season is the best thing for a coach. You forget about what happened last year and it's all ahead of you. That's what makes it fun. The anticipation, the unexpected things, how everything unfolds is the name of the game. Certainly there are teams that every year they are good. Every year they are going to be good. Every year they've always been good. Then there are other teams sort of like Avis car rental — number two and trying hard to get there.

— **Spike Dykes, Texas Tech head coach**

Ricky Williams is undoubtedly one of the best players in the country. Ricky's attitude is in order. He's been very positive and excited about the year.

The thing we've talked about Ricky a little bit is the pressure with preseason publicity and hype in regards to the Heisman Trophy, and the way we will handle that with Ricky is the Heisman Trophy is not an individual award; it's obviously a team award. You never see a player win a Heisman Trophy on a team that doesn't perform at the highest level. From our standpoint, we've changed our football team. If you want Ricky to win the Heisman, we've got to win a lot of football games.

— **Mack Brown, Texas coach**

Tony Lindsay is a guy who had a sensational season for us last year and did a lot of things on his athletic ability. He had a lot of success, but in my opinion, Tony is still learning to be that leader. If I had to draw an analogy it would be to (Missouri's) **Corby Jones**. In watching his development over three years, he is an excellent leader in my opinion. I think Tony is at that stage that he is a little bit ahead of Corby as far as he has had success, but how he handles success is very very important in the upcoming years. He really has to work to improve on being a student of the game.

— **Bob Simmons, Oklahoma State coach**

We know our offense, we know our defense, our players know what needs to be done. Our walk-on program has been very successful for us. I know what the expectations are for us and I know the pressure that accompanies this job. I know I can handle what comes my way this season.

— **Frank Solich, Nebraska coach**

I have never seen so many people get excited over a 7-4 season. These people have waited 13 years for all of this. The morale is high and season ticket sales are up, so there have been a lot of changes from the previous seasons.

— **Larry Smith, Missouri coach**

It would be a concern if you passed it (the Nebraska game) by the wayside and didn't understand that it could have significance with your players. You've got to make sure that your players and your staff and all of the people involved in your program understand what all you understand.

— **Bruce Snyder, Kansas State coach**

If you find Rogaine in any of your players' lockers, make sure you check his eligibility.

— **Rick Neuheisel, Colorado coach**



Ricky Williams

Bump, Set, Spike, Aftershock.

Nebraska Volleyball • NU Coliseum

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|---------|
| Aug. 29 | Alumni Game | 7:30 pm |
| Sept. 1 | NU vs. Creighton | 7:30 pm |
| Sept. 18-19 | US Bank Tournament | |
| Sept. 18 | NU vs. Loyola Marymount | 7:30 pm |
| Sept. 19 | NU vs. Wyoming | 11 am |
| | NU vs. Florida | 7:30 pm |
| Sept. 25 | Iowa State | 7:30 pm |
| Sept. 26 | Missouri | 7:30 pm |
| Oct. 16 | Texas | 7:30 pm |
| Oct. 17 | Texas A&M | 7:30 pm |
| Oct. 23 | Oklahoma | 7:30 pm |
| Oct. 24 | Kansas | 7:30 pm |
| Nov. 4 | Colorado | 7:30 pm |
| Nov. 6 | Kansas State | 7:30 pm |
| Nov. 13 | Baylor | 7:30 pm |
| Nov. 14 | Texas Tech | 7:30 pm |

Season Tickets

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| Reserved | \$84 |
| General (Adult) | \$42 |
| General (Youth) | \$14 |
| Faculty | \$70 |

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| Aug. 28 | Park College (Exhibition) | 7 pm |
| Sept. 4 | Wisconsin-Milwaukee | 7 pm |
| Sept. 11-13 | Husker Fila Invitational | |
| Sept. 11 | Stanford vs. Dartmouth | 5 pm |
| Sept. 11 | NU vs. Clemson | 7 pm |
| Sept. 13 | Clemson vs. Dartmouth | 11 am |
| Sept. 13 | NU vs. Stanford | 1 pm |
| Sept. 25 | Loyola-Chicago | 7 pm |
| Sept. 27 | Southwest Missouri State | 1 pm |
| Oct. 2 | Texas A&M | 7 pm |
| Oct. 4 | Texas | 1 pm |
| Oct. 9 | Portland | 7 pm |
| Oct. 11 | Colorado | 1 pm |
| Oct. 23 | Oklahoma | 7 pm |
| Oct. 25 | Oklahoma State | 1 pm |

Season Tickets

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| Reserved | \$30 |
| General | \$15 |
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| 4-Game Mini*** | \$7 |

Single Game

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***pick any 4 games

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If It's Broke, Fix It — Just Don't Make It Worse

On paper, the new championship selection process looks good, but get beyond the Band-Aid and it's easy to see there's still no solid solution



**Mike
BABCOCK**

THERE WILL BE NO split national championship this season. The Bowl Championship Series has taken care of that. The Big Ten and Pac-10 have finally conceded to sign on, so the nation's top two teams will play in the Fiesta Bowl on Jan. 2, 1999. And the winner will be the national champion.

There will be no post-bowl debate, no controversy, unless . . .

The Bowl Championship Series, or BCS (including Championship in the title was wise), will identify its top two national title contenders by means of a complicated system that will include not only the traditional — *The Associated Press* and *ESPN/USA Today* Top 25 polls — but also computer rankings, strength of schedule and a team's won-loss record, though only the losses will matter.

"In many respects this is a much fairer system because it takes into consideration all factors instead of just one or two," Roy Kramer said.

Kramer is the chairman of the Bowl Championship Series. He also is the commissioner of the Southeastern Conference.

"We wanted to go beyond the subjective polls, and what we now have is a very definitive way to determine which teams deserve to play in that game," he said.

How definitive the system is remains to be seen. Just because it's complicated and confusing doesn't necessarily make it definitive. Sometimes, a simple system can be definitive.

For example, the top four teams at the end of the regular season, as determined by an NCAA Division I-A selection committee, could compete in a three-game playoff. The games could be bowls. They should be bowls, in fact. That tradition ought to be maintained — the NCAA could cooperate for a change and share in the revenue. And the team that emerges would be the national champion.

Instead, the NCAA will continue to sanction the bowl games without participating in the process of identifying a Division I-A football champion. Television money still drives this thing.

The problem with the previous system — in addition to the fact that the Big Ten and Pac-10 refused to participate — was that the two major polls are subject to personal and regional bias.

Just over half of Division I-A football coaches vote in the *ESPN/USA Today* poll, and some who have a vote don't take it seriously enough, giving the responsibility to an assistant or a sports information director. (The problem might be resolved by allowing every coach to vote.)

The AP media poll is equally unreliable. It is driven by a pack mentality, as evidenced by the fact that Nebraska received only one first-place vote in the final regular-season poll a year ago. Most of the time, you would be hard-pressed to find 71 of 72 media types who agree on anything. Yet that was the vote even though Nebraska was just as undefeated as No. 1 Michigan.

The new system uses the computer rankings of Jeff Sagarin, the *Seattle Times* and the *New York Times*, which presumably will reduce subjectivity but cause redundancy.

The computer rankings incorporate strength of schedule, as does the new system, weighing it 25 percent. So a schedule judged as poor will be more than 25 percent of the BCS index.

Even if there weren't that redundancy, strength of schedule is given too much weight in the BCS system if for no other reason than it is directly related to strength of conference.

The BCS system takes into account not only the record of a team's opponents but also the records of the opponents' opponents. So Nebraska, for example, will be penalized by the fact that Kansas State's non-conference schedule includes Indiana State, Northern Illinois and Northeast Louisiana.

The BCS ratings won't be released until the second week in November. The reasoning is that a sufficient number of games have to be played in order for the ratings to be meaningful.

If a team from the conferences in the BCS — Big 12, Big Ten, Big East, Southeastern, Atlantic Coast and Pac-10 — or Notre Dame can make it through the season undefeated, it can reasonably expect to be playing in the national championship game, regardless of the new rankings.

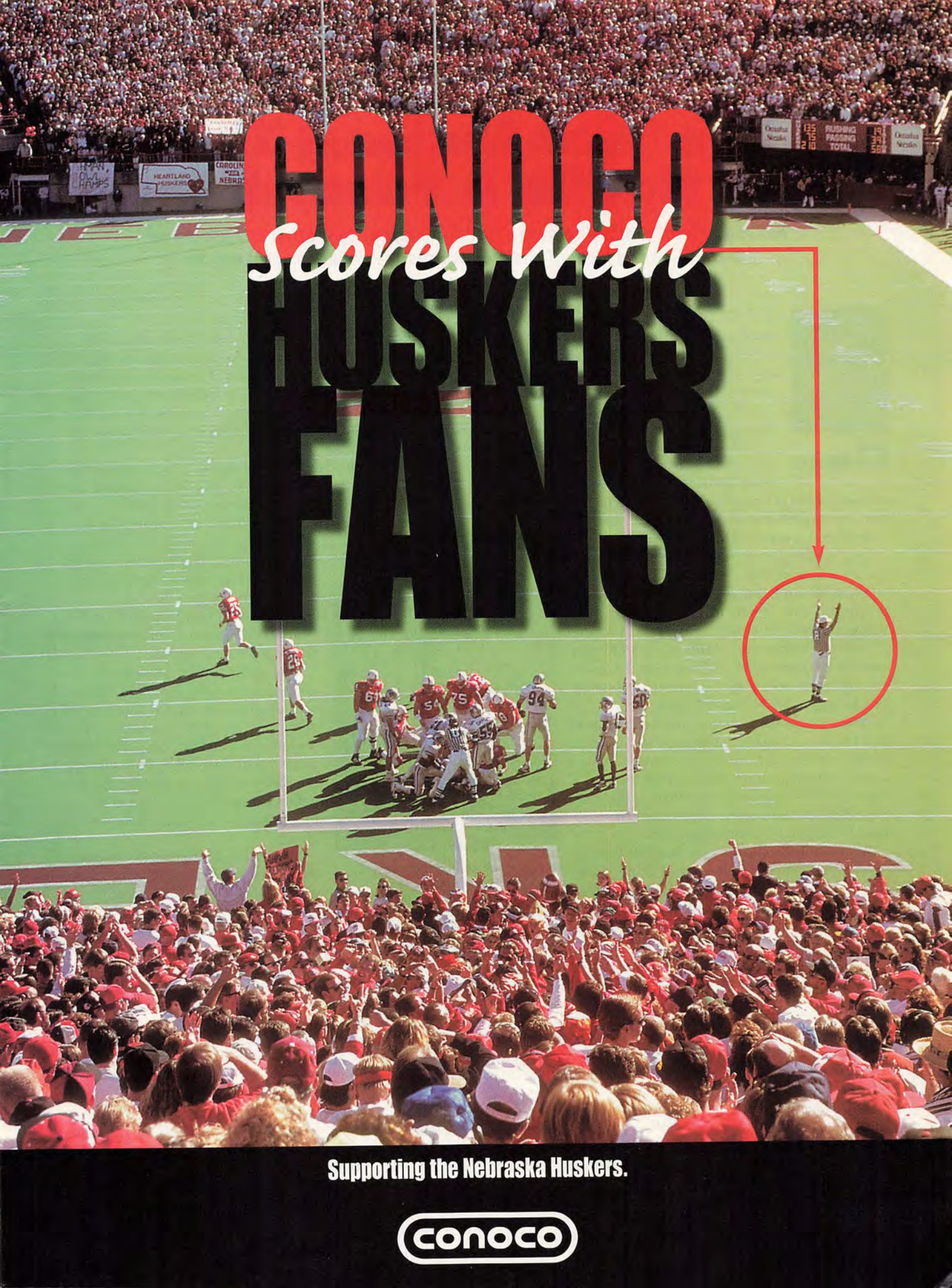
But problems are bound to occur otherwise.

If the old system was flawed, the new system must be flawed because it incorporates the old system. The flaws might be hidden in the confusion of the new system. But they won't be transformed. And the irony is that the old system would have worked fine with the Big Ten and the Pac-10 involved. ■



An unblemished record and plenty of post-Orange Bowl campaigning wasn't enough to change the "pack mentality" votes of many AP voters.

Scott D. Smith



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The Next National Title May Not Be A Football One

Fall may mean football to many, but don't forget two other NU programs that are on the cusp of national success — volleyball and soccer



Bill DOLEMAN

THERE'S A VERY GOOD reason for Husker fans to be excited about the 1998 season. No doubt about it, Nebraska again will be in contention for the national championship. Make that championships. As recent history tells us, the Big Red road to No. 1 isn't traveled by football alone.

The year was 1995. Despite a tumultuous year off the field, Tom Osborne's football team banded together to win a second-straight national championship. That same fall, Terry Pettit and his band of dreamers reeled off 31 straight wins en route to the national volleyball title.

For a school to win twin titles in two so-called major sports in the same season is a remarkable and rare feat. I remember being surprised, and somewhat disappointed, that more national attention wasn't paid to the dynamic Husker duo. After all, watching a state with a population of 1.5 million dominate the collegiate sports scene, I'm sure, turned a few heads among Nebraska's peers.

You'd think there would have been at least a "How to . . ." article detailing the Big Red's blueprint for success and its championship commitment to both men's and women's sports. Make no mistake, football is the cash cow. But success breeds success, and it's evident throughout the entire program.

What's more remarkable is that 1995 was far from a one-year-wonder kind of thing. Sure, the volleyball program's national title count stands at one, but its history and tradition are second to none and its record over the past 20-plus years is rivaled only by, well, Nebraska's football team.

In 21 seasons under Pettit, the Huskers have won better than 82 percent of their matches, claimed 13 conference titles and finished in the top 10 for 14 consecutive seasons.

Last year's team, which lost more times (seven) than any team since 1981 (29-10), won its last 10 regular season matches and made it all the way to the Pacific Regional final.

Hence the reason for the aforementioned championships. Pettit and company return five starters and 13 letterwinners from the 1997 squad, giving NU a team with a makeup similar to the one that captured the title three years ago. The heart and soul of that team was a trio of seniors — middle blocker Allison Weston, outside hitter Billie Winsett and setter Christy Johnson — whose blood, sweat and tears culminated two decades of building the program into the nation's

best.

True, Stanford has earned the title "Team of the 90s" by winning four national titles in the last five years. But you give me a home match in the NU Coliseum filled to the rafters with 5,000 fans, and the title for best program goes to the Big Red, not to the Cardinal. I've been to Palo Alto, Calif., for a regional final, and there is no comparison . . . there is no place like Nebraska.

While the '98 Huskers will miss the services of All-America Lisa Reitsma, whose eligibility ended last December, they will look to another trio of seniors to lead them to volleyball's promised land. It's along the lines of reloading and not rebuilding. The positions are the same, only the names have changed. Substitute Megan Korver, Jaime Krondak and Fiona Nepo for Weston, Winsett and Johnson, and the stage is set for something special.

The same could be said for the women's soccer program, which already ranks among the nation's elite after only five years of existence. Two seasons ago, John Walker's club ran its record to an incredible 23-0, winning the first-ever Big 12 title along the way before being eliminated in the NCAA quarterfinals. Last year's team won 18 games.

As they head into the '98 campaign, the Huskers hold down the No. 8 spot in the preseason polls. Not that it matters much, given the fact that, like volleyball, there is an NCAA tournament to determine the champion. But it is an indication of just how far the program has come in such a short amount of time. Though the ranking is merely a guess at best, to be penciled in among the nation's more established programs is both a compliment and a sign of respect, especially in an area when women's soccer is experiencing exponential growth. The thought process of the voters must be something like, "Well, Nebraska's always good, so we better put them up there somewhere."

That's what makes the fall so much fun for Nebraska fans. The thinking is the same no matter which Husker team is on the ballot. ■



Bob Berry

Much like this season, the volleyball team counted on a trio of seniors to secure its first national title in 1995.

Bill Doleman's face is familiar to Cornhusker fans. He is host for several Nebraska-related television programs including the "Husker Show" and coaches' shows for Terry Pettit, Paul Sanderford and Frank Solich.

Is The Doctor Really A Quack?

Good news, Husker fans — Dr. Bradley P. Carlin, a statistics wiz and NU alum, has given the Huskers a 13.4 percent chance to win the title again



Curt McKEEVER

THE GUY'S NAME is Carlin and he says the probability that Nebraska will win the national championship this season is about 13.4 percent.

Yeah, I know. Now you're expecting to read about his famous seven-words-you-can't-say-on-TV act.

Sorry, this is not the comedy of George Carlin, but the detailed work of Dr. Bradley P. Carlin.

While the friendly doctor seems to have a sense of humor that would allow him to survive a stand-up routine at your local comedy club's amateur night, in this case he's as serious as a Cornhusker fan who has already purchased a non-refundable airline seat to Phoenix and a ticket to the Fiesta Bowl.

Carlin, an associate professor in the Division of Biostatistics at the University of Minnesota, teaches a lot of courses I couldn't comprehend and most certainly would drop or fail.

This isn't to say that what he does isn't interesting or important. One of Dr. Carlin's interests is looking at statistical applications in AIDS research. That sounds admirable.

One of his other interests, however, probably generates as much or more response to his e-mail directory. You see, Carlin also happens to be a 1984 graduate of the University of Nebraska. So it is no wonder that he has delved into the plight of the Cornhuskers with both sleeves rolled up.

Some might call it a sickness. But really, what's the difference between someone trying to figure out the probability of a team winning a national championship, and another person looking at the weather forecast when deciding whether to use Morten Andersen or Pete Stoyanovich as their fantasy football team kicker?

"I'm not the only math geek on Earth, after all," said Carlin, who, off the top of his head, guessed that Tom Osborne was 4-12 against Barry Switzer (he was actually 5-12) but 13-13 overall against Oklahoma (correct). "I have an e-mail list of Husker fans."

To them, his "work" might be considered worthy of Pulitzer prize consideration. After all, it gives the Cornhuskers as good a chance at winning the national championship as Florida and Florida State.

Here's how it works:

Carlin, who once wrote a paper on how to bet on the NCAA basketball tournament, uses the computer ratings of

Jeff Sagarin (published in *USA Today*) and applies those numbers to point spreads of Nebraska games. He's able to use a statistical formula for converting point spreads into win probability. I think it involves a bell curve. The formula includes a home-field advantage that's worth about a field goal (yeah, I know, Memorial Stadium is worth more than that, but try and play along, anyway).

Nebraska is No. 1 in the first Sagarin poll by a wide margin. The Cornhuskers' rating is 104.71, while No. 2 Florida is 101.44.

In Carlin's world, Nebraska is favored to win every game during the regular season, ranging from as much as 53 points against Alabama-Birmingham to as little as eight points against Kansas State. With a win probability of 100 percent, he is guaranteeing victory against UAB, but that number dips to 69.4 percent for the game in Manhattan, Kan.



Doug DeVoe

If the Huskers and Ags square off in the conference title game like last year, Carlin gives NU an 86.4 percent chance of repeating as champs.

Carlin even goes as far as listing NU's chances of winning against Texas A&M (86.4 percent) should the teams play in the Big 12 play-off and a meeting against Florida in the Fiesta Bowl (48.8 percent).

Carlin's preseason probability of 13.4 percent that Nebraska wins the 1998 national championship had me asking him how that stacked up to past years.

Carlin remembered the number computing to around 20 percent prior to the 1995 season, but he got nervous about that and lowered it. Sounds a little like the Carlin who played trombone in the Nebraska marching band in 1980.

"The Huskers had OU at home that year and it was a close game, but we lost, as we often did in those days," he said. "Everybody around me was just totally down, totally wiped out, and I made some remark like, 'It's only a game.' A couple of guys (in the band) just glared at me like if they hadn't been required to stay in line, they would've ripped my head off.

"At that point in my life, I thought, 'Hey, these people need to get a life, a hobby.'"

I can only imagine what they'll be saying about Carlin at the next NU marching band reunion. ■

Curt McKeever is a sportswriter, covering the University of Nebraska for the Lincoln Journal Star. In addition to reporting on football, he is the primary beat writer for the men's basketball and baseball teams.

Mission: Impossible?

The UAB Blazers face seemingly insurmountable odds against the mighty Cornhuskers

By Mark DEROWITSCH

Watson Brown has been in this position before. He's been in the role of underdog against one of the giants of college football.

Brown will feel right at home on Saturday, when his University of Alabama-Birmingham Blazers begin the 1998 season against defending co-national champion Nebraska at Lincoln's Memorial Stadium. The Blazers, in just their third year as a member of NCAA Division I-A, will play Nebraska a week after the

Cornhuskers opened the year with a 56-27 win over Louisiana Tech.

The first time Brown was in what many football experts call a no-win situation was 1983, when his Cincinnati football team had the unenviable pleasure to play defending national champion Penn State to open the season. The Nittany Lions were coming off a loss to Nebraska when they played the Bearcats.

Sound familiar?

Now you know why Brown isn't exactly shaking in his shoes at the prospect of playing Nebraska.

"Somebody asked me, 'How do you beat Nebraska?'" Brown told the *Birmingham News*. "Well, you have to go play perfectly and they have to help you. (Penn State) had new quarterbacks and they played poorly. I think they had five turnovers and we won 14-3. They couldn't score. And we come back and play Oklahoma State and Jimmy Johnson the next week in front of a sellout crowd at Cincinnati. So it doesn't take much to take the next step."

Does that mean Brown likes the Blazers' chances against the Huskers?

Not necessarily. But Brown believes Alabama-Birmingham is ready to become an established member of Division I-A.

In fact, Brown has his sights set on much more realistic goals.

"Could we compete in Conference USA this year?" Brown said. "No. Could we beat any one of them? Yeah. We're capable of that."

"The next step is to knock off a Kansas or a Virginia Tech."

That's easier said than done. Last season, the Blazers lost to Kansas 24-0 at Lawrence, Kan., while Virginia Tech handed UAB a 37-0 defeat. The previous season, Kansas dished out a 72-0 whipping over the Blazers.

ALABAMA-BIRM.
(0-0)



NEBRASKA
(1-0)



Brian SMITH



Jay FOREMAN

September 5, 1998 • 12:30 p.m. (CST)
Memorial Stadium • Lincoln, Neb.

But UAB showed signs of growth last season. UAB managed to finish the year 5-6, although none of its victories were impressive. The Blazers posted wins against Jacksonville State, Western Kentucky, Southwestern Louisiana, Tennessee Tech and Arkansas State.

In the Blazers' six losses, the team scored just 75 points and was shut out twice. In addition, Memphis held UAB

Tentative 2 Deeps

NEBRASKA OFFENSE

| | | | | | |
|------|----|---------------------|------|-----|-----|
| SE | 6 | Kenny Cheatham*** | 6-4 | 210 | Sr. |
| | 3 | Matt Davison* | 6-0 | 180 | So. |
| LT | 69 | Adam Julch** | 6-5 | 315 | Jr. |
| | 58 | Dave Volk | 6-4 | 280 | Fr. |
| LG | 63 | James Sherman** | 6-2 | 295 | Jr. |
| | 61 | Brandt Wade** | 6-2 | 300 | Sr. |
| C | 59 | Josh Hesekew*** | 6-3 | 290 | Sr. |
| | 54 | Dominic Raiola | 6-2 | 300 | Fr. |
| RG | 72 | Ben Gessford* | 6-2 | 290 | Sr. |
| | 55 | Russ Hochstein* | 6-3 | 280 | So. |
| RT | 65 | Jason Schwab* | 6-1 | 300 | Jr. |
| -or- | 68 | Jeff Clausen** | 6-6 | 305 | Jr. |
| TE | 88 | Sheldon Jackson*** | 6-4 | 245 | Sr. |
| | 85 | T.J. DeBates** | 6-3 | 250 | Jr. |
| QB | 12 | Bobby Newcombe* | 6-0 | 195 | So. |
| | 7 | Eric Crouch | 6-0 | 200 | Fr. |
| FB | 45 | Joel Makovicka*** | 5-11 | 240 | Sr. |
| | 40 | Billy Legate*** | 5-11 | 230 | Sr. |
| IB | 36 | Correll Buckhalter* | 6-0 | 225 | So. |
| -or- | 38 | Dan Alexander* | 6-0 | 250 | So. |
| WB | 14 | Lance Brown** | 5-11 | 190 | Sr. |
| | 5 | Shevin Wiggins** | 5-11 | 200 | Sr. |
| PK | 14 | Kris Brown*** | 5-10 | 205 | Sr. |

NEBRASKA DEFENSE

| | | | | | |
|------|----|--------------------|------|-----|-----|
| LR | 57 | Chad Kelsay*** | 6-3 | 250 | Sr. |
| | 83 | Kyle Vanden Bosch* | 6-4 | 260 | So. |
| NT | 96 | Steve Warren** | 6-1 | 305 | Jr. |
| | 77 | Bobby Gill | 6-0 | 275 | So. |
| DT | 99 | Jason Wiltz** | 6-4 | 310 | Sr. |
| | 91 | Loran Kaiser* | 6-5 | 280 | So. |
| RR | 84 | Mike Rucker*** | 6-6 | 250 | Sr. |
| | 92 | Travis Tolline*** | 6-3 | 245 | Sr. |
| SLB | 46 | Brian Shaw** | 6-1 | 215 | Jr. |
| -or- | 37 | Tony Ortiz | 6-0 | 215 | Jr. |
| MLB | 44 | Jay Foreman** | 5-1 | 240 | Sr. |
| | 13 | Carlos Polk* | 5-3 | 245 | So. |
| WLB | 1 | Eric Johnson** | 5-1 | 205 | Sr. |
| | 50 | Julius Jackson** | 6-0 | 235 | Jr. |
| LCB | 16 | Erwin Swiney* | 6-0 | 185 | So. |
| | 9 | Khari Reynolds* | 5-10 | 185 | So. |
| FS | 14 | Dion Booker | 6-1 | 205 | Fr. |
| -or- | 42 | Troy Watchorn | 5-11 | 195 | So. |
| ROV | 21 | Mike Brown** | 5-10 | 205 | Jr. |
| | 25 | Joe Walker* | 5-10 | 200 | So. |
| RCB | 22 | Ralph Brown** | 5-9 | 180 | Jr. |
| | 11 | Jerome Peterson** | 5-7 | 185 | Jr. |
| P | 23 | Bill Lafleur*** | 5-11 | 200 | Sr. |

Tentative 2 Deeps

ALABAMA-BIRMINGHAM DEFENSE

| | | | | | |
|-----|----|--------------------|------|-----|-----|
| DE | 8 | Derrick Cloud* | 6-3 | 240 | So. |
| | 93 | Billy Lawley | 6-1 | 250 | Fr. |
| DT | 99 | Pernell Davis** | 6-4 | 305 | Sr. |
| | 91 | Terrance Winborn** | 6-5 | 250 | Jr. |
| NG | 69 | Curtis Jeter*** | 5-11 | 290 | Sr. |
| | 98 | James Lewis* | 6-4 | 285 | Sr. |
| DE | 88 | Sterrick Morgan*** | 6-3 | 265 | Sr. |
| | 89 | Eddie Freeman | 6-4 | 245 | Fr. |
| OLB | 23 | Darnell Stiel | 6-1 | 195 | Jr. |
| | 43 | Johnathan Sledge | 6-1 | 210 | Jr. |
| LB | 52 | Shannon Monroe* | 6-2 | 253 | Sr. |
| | 50 | Ryan Lundy*** | 6-3 | 240 | Sr. |
| LB | 47 | Brian Smith** | 6-3 | 252 | Jr. |
| | 41 | Tyrone Griffin* | 6-1 | 205 | So. |
| CB | 21 | Rodregis Brooks** | 5-11 | 175 | Jr. |
| | 1 | Cedric Thatch* | 5-11 | 175 | Jr. |
| SS | 9 | Omar Parker*** | 6-1 | 175 | Sr. |
| | 44 | Wois Foss | 5-11 | 180 | Fr. |
| FS | 45 | Scotty Hollins* | 5-11 | 170 | Jr. |
| | 35 | Adrian Singleton | 6-2 | 195 | Fr. |
| CB | 33 | Anthony Blevins | 5-11 | 190 | Sr. |
| | 15 | Andrew Kopecky | 5-11 | 180 | Fr. |
| P | 16 | Daniel Dixon* | 6-3 | 195 | So. |

ALABAMA-BIRMINGHAM OFFENSE

| | | | | | |
|------|----|-------------------|------|-----|-----|
| QB | 12 | Lee Jolly* | 6-2 | 195 | So. |
| | 16 | Daniel Dixon* | 6-3 | 195 | So. |
| RB | 5 | Lucious Foster** | 5-10 | 185 | Jr. |
| | 25 | Percy Coleman* | 5-10 | 175 | So. |
| FB | 3 | Cory Conley | 6-1 | 190 | So. |
| | 22 | Kyle Rea* | 6-3 | 210 | So. |
| WR | 20 | Maurice Gallery | 5-11 | 180 | Fr. |
| | 85 | Desmond Oden | 6-0 | 180 | So. |
| WR | 2 | Darrius Malone** | 6-3 | 185 | Jr. |
| | 19 | Travis Johnson* | 6-3 | 190 | So. |
| LT | 75 | Joel Cain | 6-5 | 250 | Jr. |
| | 76 | Josh Case | 6-6 | 295 | Fr. |
| LG | 56 | Brian Creel*** | 6-1 | 295 | Sr. |
| | 65 | Preston Fray | 6-5 | 285 | Fr. |
| C | 55 | Brandon Herring** | 6-2 | 262 | Jr. |
| | 59 | Josh Powers** | 6-3 | 250 | Jr. |
| RG | 71 | Tim Medders* | 6-3 | 290 | So. |
| | 57 | Matt Bowden* | 6-7 | 310 | So. |
| RT | 66 | Melvin Sidney** | 6-4 | 305 | Sr. |
| | 72 | Bo Perry | 6-6 | 320 | Fr. |
| TE | 87 | Undrae Crosby* | 6-5 | 252 | So. |
| -or- | 81 | Brett Richards* | 6-4 | 230 | So. |
| PK | 27 | Jake Arians** | 5-10 | 180 | Jr. |

to just seven points while it managed just 10 at Arizona.

The ticket to success this year, then, is a more potent offense. That means sophomores Lee Jolly and Daniel Dixon, who each saw extensive action last year, must get better under less-than-ideal circumstances. Jolly did throw for 1,530 yards and 11 touchdowns last season, but he was picked off seven times and racked up 210 yards in losses when he was forced to carry the football. Dixon didn't fare much better. He completed just 23 of 65 passes (35.4 percent) for 361 yards but gave up five interceptions. He did rush for 130 yards on 43 carries and scored three touchdowns on the ground.

The Huskers will get a look at both of the Blazers' young quarterbacks.

"I don't see any way we won't play them both," Brown said. "To say there will be an alternation, no. But to say they both won't play this year, I think they will."

"I've always run quarterback-oriented offenses. Last year was hard because we started with both freshmen and they had not played a game, and it showed. We tried to hide them the best we could."

Running back Lucious Foster supplied nearly half of the Blazers' ground game last season. Foster, a junior who started eight games last year, gained 737 of the team's 1,509 yards on the ground. He averaged nearly five yards a pop and scored six touchdowns. Bart Battles and Benji Morrow shared time at fullback.

When the Blazers do go to the air, they will have an experienced group of receivers to turn to.

Darrius Malone started six games and ended up second on the team with 28 receptions for 435 yards and three touchdowns. In addition to Malone, Quentin Troupe and Travis Johnson also earned an occasional start. Troupe had just four catches, but Johnson added 13 and also scored twice.

The Blazers' biggest problem, though, was its offensive line.

The front five gave up a whopping 32 sacks last season and must show improvement if UAB has any hopes of turning the corner.

Melvin Sidney returns to start at right tackle, and Joel Cain will start on the opposite side. Tim Medders and Brian Creel are the guards while Brandon Herring is the only returning center who saw action last season.

"The weakness on offense is still our offensive line," Brown said. "We redshirted six offensive linemen and they're all going to have to go out there and play. They haven't played a down. It's going to be a slow process."

Defensively, the Blazers will turn to linebacker Brian Smith to provide leadership. Smith recorded a team-high 114 tackles, including 72 solo stops, last season. Smith, for one, is excited about the prospects of facing the Huskers.

In fact, he said, what the team accomplished preparing for the game will help down the road.

"I think the game changed our attitude a lot, Smith said. "The work ethic has changed. Last summer, about half the team went home. This summer, almost the whole team stayed and worked out."

Sterrick Morgan, a defensive end, tied for the team lead in sacks with three. Morgan is one of eight players on defense who started at least one game last season.

The Blazers gave up only 180 yards per game on the ground, but they likely haven't seen anybody with the strength of Nebraska.

UAB's game with the Cornhuskers will mark the second time the Blazers have faced a team from Nebraska. In 1991, the Blazers faced Hastings College and handed the Broncos a 9-7 loss. This one will probably be just a little tougher. ■

TALE OF THE TAPE

Who Has The Edge?

QUARTERBACKS

It's start No. 2 in the Bobby Newcombe era. Bad news for Husker fans: He's only going to get better. While Newcombe will run toward the end zone, UAB's Lee Jolly and Daniel Dixon will run for their lives.



RUNNING BACKS

Even with the injury to DeAngelo Evans, Nebraska's second best I-back, Correll Buckhalter is much better than anything the Blazers have to offer. Start the Heisman watch for Buckhalter now.



RECEIVERS

Alabama-Birmingham will throw the ball more, and they have some experienced receivers. That's where the good news stops. The Blazers will have to go against a very good Husker secondary.



OFFENSIVE LINE

The definite weak spot of the UAB team. Blazer offensive linemen will never face a bigger challenge than this. Nebraska has a young bunch, but compared to UAB, it's an MVP unit. It's pancake time.



DEFENSIVE LINE

Trying to stop the powerful Husker pass rush will make the Blazers wish they were still playing NAIA foes. Look for Rucker and Kelsay to have a huge day against a suspect Blazer line.



LINEBACKERS

The Blazers have a good one in Brian Smith, who led the team with 114 tackles last season. Can he compare with the Huskers' Jay Foreman, Eric Johnson and Tony Ortiz? Probably not.



SECONDARY

The Blazers have just one player in Rodregis Brooks who started last year. Look for Bobby Newcombe to test his arm early against UAB. The Husker secondary is young, experienced and speedy.



SPECIAL TEAMS

UAB punter Daniel Dixon is likely to get a good workout. Can the Blazers keep the Huskers from making special plays out of the returns? If not, it will be a long day for for the Blazer's special teams units.



OTs SIDNEY/CAIN

VS

DEs RUCKER/KELSAY

KEY MATCHUP

The Blazers' offensive line allowed opposing defenses to put a world of hurt on their quarterbacks last season. Thirty-two times during the season, either Lee Jolly or Daniel Dixon, who shared time at quarterback, went face-to-face with an opposing defender after the Blazers' line had collapsed. This season doesn't promise much relief for Jolly or Dixon.

Mike Rucker and Chad Kelsay, who are expected to generate much of the Huskers' pass rush, should have a field day against the Blazers. Rucker recorded 7.5 sacks last year, second only to Grant Wistrom's 8.5 sacks. By the way, Rucker accomplished the trick as a backup last season, spending his time spelling Wistrom and Kelsay. Kelsay, meanwhile, had three sacks and 14 quarterback hurries.

UAB's tackles, Melvin Sidney and Joel Cain, will have to have a flawless effort. If that doesn't happen, don't be surprised if the Huskers rush ends spend as much time in the Blazers backfield as they do on their own side of the line of scrimmage. ■

For the record, the first play of the Frank Solich era was a fullback trap.

Joel Makovicka ran off right guard for a 12-yard gain.

The reasoning was fairly simple. "I wanted to get the ball to our most experienced player on the first play," Solich said, adding: "They probably thought I was going to go deep."

During a news conference prior to the start of preseason practice, Solich had said he was considering going deep on the first play, a comment that elicited disbelieving laughter.

He reiterated that possibility on the Tuesday before the opener.

And again, reporters laughed at the prospect of a deep pass.

A trap with his most experienced running back carrying, "I thought was smart," Solich said after Nebraska's 56-27 victory against Louisiana Tech in the Eddie Robinson Classic.

So was the second play, a pitch to wingback Shevin Wiggins, who also gained 12 yards.

Then came the deep pass from quarterback Bobby Newcombe to tight end Sheldon Jackson for 46 yards and a touchdown. A wide-open Jackson caught the ball at about the 15-yard line.

"It was a good situation to be in, I guess," said Jackson. "They bit on the play-action; I got behind the safeties and the ball was gone. I just ran underneath, catch it and get in the end zone."

Three plays and 48 seconds into the Solich era, the Cornhuskers led 7-0.

It was going to be easy — or, at least, it appeared that way.

A minute and a half later, Nebraska began a 14-play, 60-yard touchdown drive directed and capped by Newcombe from one yard out, increasing the score to 14-0 with a second Kris Brown extra-point kick.

Sophomore I-back Correll Buckhalter had carries of 13 and 17 yards during the drive.

Tom Osborne, who was out of town on a speaking engagement, would have been proud. The Cornhuskers had a new head coach, but they were their same old relentless selves.

After Louisiana Tech finally managed a first down on its second offensive possession, Nebraska went to work again, driving 63 yards on 10 plays for a third touchdown. Willie Miller, the No. 2 fullback, scored on an 8-yard run. Two minutes into the second quarter, the score was 21-0.

A classic in the making it was not, even after Louisiana Tech countered with a 16-play, 80-yard drive, finished off by a 1-yard pass from Tim Rattay to Sean Cangelosi on fourth down.

The excitement on the Bulldog sideline was short-lived, however, not only because the extra-point kick deflected off the right post but also because Joe Walker returned the ensuing kickoff 99 yards for a touchdown. Covering the point spread of 34 1/2 wasn't looking all that unreasonable for Nebraska.

Before Louisiana Tech could get to the solace of the locker-room at halftime, the Cornhuskers covered 64 yards in five plays and scored for a fifth time on another 1-yard run by Newcombe.

On the last play of the half, Rattay was sacked for a 10-yard loss by rush end Chad Kelsay. The ball popped loose under the force of the blow, but the Bulldogs' Troy Edwards recovered.

The score was 35-6. Bring on

The Husker defense stuffed the Louisiana Tech running game, limiting the Bulldogs to minus-21 yards on the ground.



Scott Bruhn



Mixed EMOTIONS

**It wasn't pretty,
but in the end,
Nebraska stood
tall over the
scrappy Bulldogs
By Mike Babcock**

Alabama-Birmingham.

You know, of course, that the first game of the Solich era wasn't nearly as pleasant as this summary of the first half indicates. You probably watched in disbelief as Rattay and Edwards combined on one of the most remarkable passing performances in Nebraska — and NCAA — history.

The second half was as disconcerting for Cornhusker fans as the first half was pleasing.

"We're embarrassed at the way we played," said Nebraska free safety Mike Brown. "We want to apologize to our teammates for not holding up our end of the bargain."

If you want to spare yourself reliving the agony, skip the next couple of paragraphs.

Rattay completed 46-of-68 passes for 590 yards, all record totals against Nebraska by a team and by an individual. The previous records were 30-of-52 for 489 yards by Kansas State's Chad May in 1993.

Rattay also threw four touchdown passes, tying a record against the Cornhuskers.

Edwards was even more impressive, catching 21 passes for 405 yards and three touchdowns. The 405 receiving yards were an NCAA single-game record, shattering the previous record of 363 yards by Randy Gatewood of Nevada-Las Vegas in 1994. Gatewood caught an NCAA-record 23 passes en route to setting that mark.

Edwards' touchdowns came on plays of 52, 94 and 80 yards. The 94-yarder was the longest against Nebraska since 1976, when Missouri's Pete Woods teamed with Joe Stewart for a 98-yard score.

"That's the most impressive thing for a receiver that I've seen in my life," Brown said of Edwards' numbers. "The defensive backs, we're very disappointed in our performance today."

What made it even less palatable, if that's possible, were Edwards' remarks beforehand.

"I don't believe the talk that their secondary is a strong point," the senior wide receiver and Biletnikoff Award candidate from Shreveport, La., told the *Omaha World-Herald*. "I've seen the film, and I don't think they defend the pass really well. I honestly don't think they match up with our receivers."

Edwards' never quit talking,

according to Brown. He kept up a constant chatter during the game. "When you have 21 catches for 405 yards, you can guess what he was saying," said Brown.

For those who couldn't guess, Brown said, Edwards was telling Cornhusker defenders that they couldn't cover him, that he was the best. But then, Brown added with a wry smile, "He is the best."

Nebraska defensive coordinator Charlie McBride offered some perspective in an otherwise glum assessment of what happened. "He does this to everybody," he said of the 5-foot-10, 195-pound Edwards. "He just runs off in every game. He's a very confident

the game.

"We've had corners here who are making more money than the three of us combined who have been run by. They play on Sundays, and they have Super Bowl rings. They know that comes with the territory.

"The object is still to win, and it's still to try to force a team to be one-dimensional."

The Cornhuskers achieved both against Louisiana Tech. They won handily, and they prevented Louisiana Tech from establishing even a semblance of a running game.

The Bulldogs finished with a net of minus-21 yards rushing.

In simple terms, Nebraska's

Scott Bruhn



football player, a great athlete.

"He's a first-round draft choice. He'll be going to the NFL; I'm sure he is."

The Cornhuskers' defensive goal was to limit Louisiana Tech to under 300 total yards, said McBride, who is in his 22nd season at Nebraska, and 17th as defensive coordinator.

Obviously, he was surprised by the Bulldogs' 569 yards, which were nearly 100 short of the record against Nebraska — Oklahoma gained 656 yards in a 54-6 victory at Norman in 1956.

"We aren't going to suddenly become a two-deep zone team because we're afraid some guy might run 96 yards and beat us on a deep throw," secondary coach George Darlington said to a couple of reporters following

Much to the surprise of Husker fans, Bobby Newcombe was limited to just 12 yards rushing on 12 carries, inflicting most of his damage through the air.

defense didn't make plays when it needed to.

"When it's third-and-7, you've got to come up with a defense, whether it's a blitz, whether it's a zone or a combination, to make it fourth-and-7," said Darlington. "We didn't do that enough.

"I'm not saying I'm not disappointed we didn't do better. But I know this, if you throw the baby out with the bath water, then all of a sudden you go from being an aggressive team to a passive team.

"And we sure don't want to do that."

Still, "any time you get over 300, it probably surprises you," McBride said.

"We've got a lot of work to do on defense," Kelsay said. "I've always been told a win's a win. But we've got a lot of work to do. We've got to make sure we get better every week."

The same is true of the offense, which slowed down some after the impressive first half.

Newcombe, who was starting for the first time, managed only 12 yards on 12 carries, but he scored two touchdowns and he completed 9-of-10 passes for 168 yards and the touchdown to Jackson.

Newcombe and Jackson teamed up on what appeared to be a second touchdown on the final possession of the first half. But Jackson was ruled down at the 1-yard line.

The replay on the HuskerVision screens elicited some boos from the crowd.

Jackson didn't question the officials' call. "Honestly and truthfully, I have no idea," he said as to whether or not he made it to the end zone. "My teammates told me I did, and everybody in the stands said I did. But I think the most important thing is what the guy with the striped jersey says.

"And since he didn't call me in (the end zone), I guess I wasn't in."

As it was, Jackson gained 48 yards on the play to finish with a team-high 94 receiving yards.

Buckhalter, who got his first career start because DeAngelo Evans was sidelined following knee surgery, was the game's leading rusher, getting 143 yards and two touchdowns on only 19 carries.

The sophomore from Collins, Miss., credited Nebraska's inexperienced offensive line, which he knew, he said, "would carry on the tradition and be one of the best in the nation."

When the final second ticked off the clock at Memorial Stadium, Solich breathed a sigh of relief. Quarterbacks coach Turner Gill was the first to shake his hand. "For a first ballgame, it's OK," Solich said.

He was asked what he thought about Louisiana Tech's 590 passing yards.

"Who had the 590 yards?" he replied. "In passing? That's a tremendous amount of yards, but that's the way it goes."

For the record, things almost certainly will improve.

"I feel relieved that we've got one down," said Solich. ■

4TH & 1 INCHES

More News From The Louisiana Tech Game

● **Terry Bradshaw**, a Louisiana Tech alum, was an honorary captain for the Bulldogs and participated in the pre-game coin toss. **Karl Malone**, another Louisiana Tech alum, also was supposed to serve as an honorary captain, but he was unable to attend the game because of a death in the family. Malone paid for Louisiana Tech's weight room.

● Former Cornhusker **Grant Wistrom**, last season's Lombardi Award winner and a rookie rush end for the NFL's St. Louis Rams, was at Memorial Stadium for a halftime ceremony in which his No. 98 jersey was retired. **Aaron Taylor's** jersey also was to be retired, but Taylor was unable to attend.

● **Kris Brown**, Nebraska's senior place-kicker, established a school record for consecutive extra-point kicks made. His eight against Louisiana Tech give him 87 in a row.

The previous record was 83, set by **Gregg Barrios** from 1986 to 1990. Brown has 307 career points, five short of tying the school record held by **Mike Rozier**, the 1983 Heisman Trophy winner.

● The Cornhuskers' 56 points were the most in a Nebraska coach's debut since 1911, when "**Jumbo**" **Stiehm's** first team defeated Kearney State 117-0. **Frank Solich** is Nebraska's 26th head coach.

● Senior tight end and co-captain **Sheldon Jackson** on the difference between Solich and his predecessor, **Tom Osborne**: "They're great men. I see, actually, two differences. One is the physical difference.

Coach Solich is about 5-foot-2. Coach Osborne is about 6-foot-3, 6-foot-4.

"Have you noticed that? Am I the only one? OK.

"Coach Solich is more of a motivator, and he got the team pretty hyped up yesterday during the walk-through practice we had. Coach Osborne was a more laid-back, conservative type who believed that the players should be more self-motivated to play. Coach Solich, I think honestly and truthfully ... he would put the pads on himself if he could and get out there and play right along with us.

"You can see it in his eyes and kind of hear it in his voice when he talks to you."

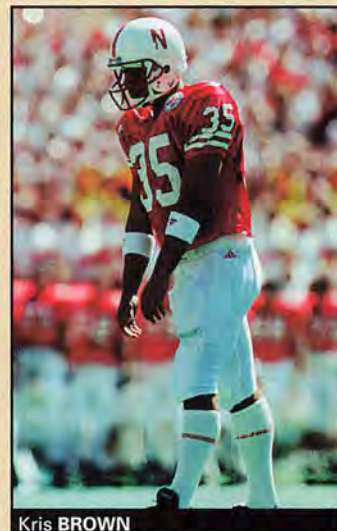
Jackson's 94 receiving yards on two catches were a career high.

● **Frank Kush**, for whom Nebraska defensive coordinator **Charlie McBride** was once an assistant, "said give me a quarterback and some receivers and I'll beat you, and he was right," McBride said after the game. Kush's offensive philosophy didn't apply exactly because Louisiana Tech didn't win.

● McBride on the play of the defensive front: "I don't think we have the quickness that we've had. Our inside guys are really going to have to work at it. We alternated inside and outside pretty good.

"But we didn't get the production out of the four guys inside."

● The Huskers appeared to come through the game without any serious injuries. Quarterback **Bobby Newcombe** experienced leg cramps late in the game. Linebacker **Julius Jackson** sprained his left ankle, but it doesn't appear to be serious. Early indications were that neither quarterback **Eric Crouch** (bruised right shoulder) or defensive tackle **Jason Wiltz** (right knee sprain) will miss the next game. ■



Kris BROWN

1998 Schedule/Record (1-0)

| | | |
|----------|----------------------|------------|
| Aug. 29 | vs. Louisiana Tech\$ | W, 56-27 |
| Sept. 5 | Ala.-Birmingham | 12:30 p.m. |
| Sept. 12 | @ California | 6 p.m. |
| Sept. 26 | Washington | 2:30 p.m. |
| Oct. 3 | vs. Oklahoma St.& | TBA |
| Oct. 10 | @ Texas A&M | 1 p.m. |
| Oct. 17 | Kansas | 12:30 p.m. |
| Oct. 24 | Missouri | 12:30 p.m. |
| Oct. 31 | Texas | 12:30 p.m. |
| Nov. 7 | @ Iowa St. | 1 p.m. |
| Nov. 14 | @ Kansas St. | 1:10 p.m. |
| Nov. 27 | Colorado | 1:30 p.m. |

\$ Eddie Robinson Football Classic • Memorial Stadium • Lincoln, Neb.
& Arrowhead Stadium • Kansas City, Mo.
(Times are subject to change and are Central)

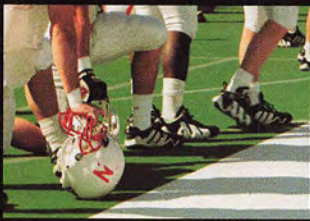
THE TRADITION **CONTINUES**



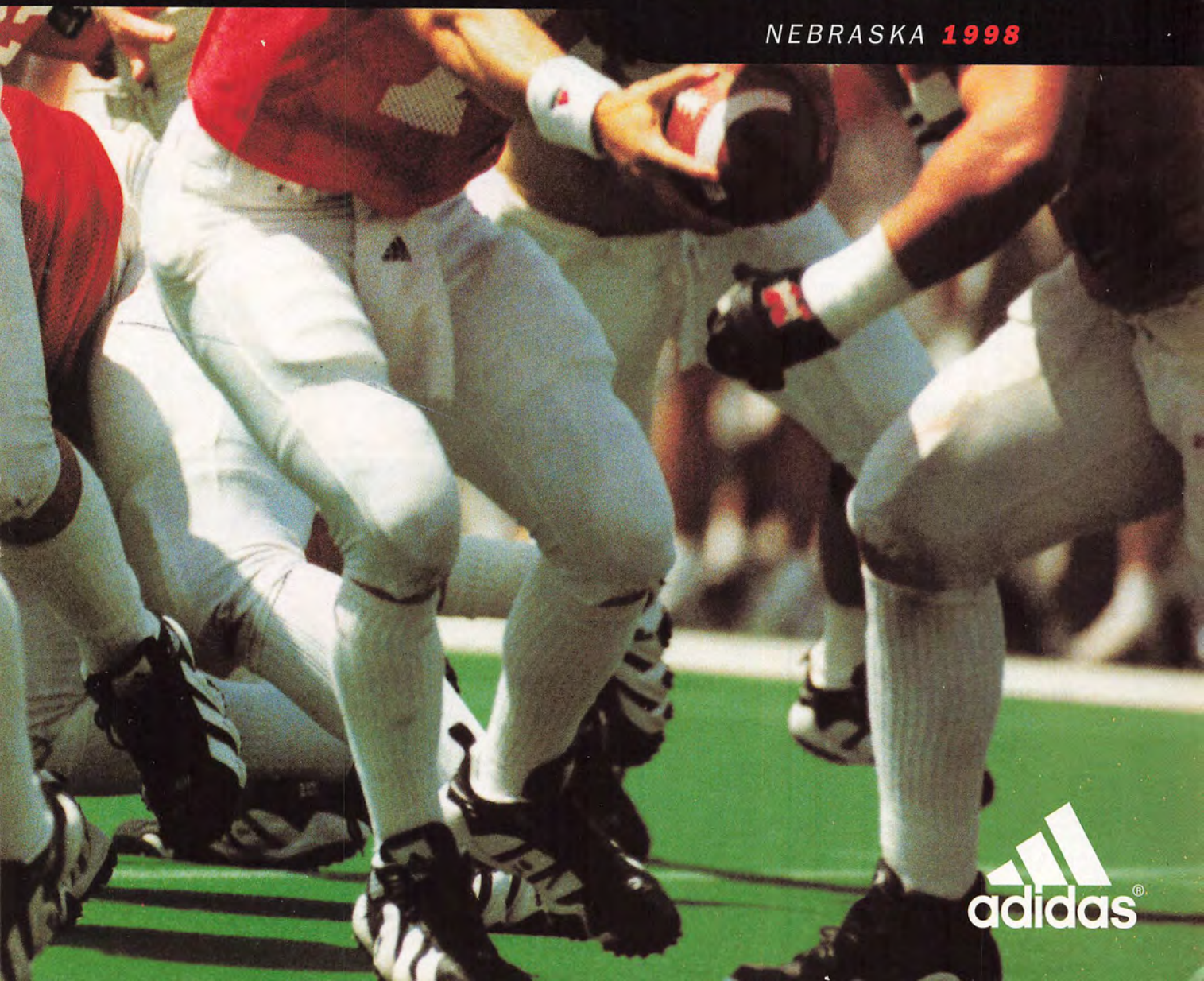
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BY THE NUMBERS

Nebraska vs Louisiana Tech
August 29, 1998 • Lincoln, Nebraska

Score By Quarters

| | | | | | | |
|----------|----|----|----|----|---|----|
| La. Tech | 0 | 6 | 15 | 6 | — | 27 |
| Nebraska | 14 | 21 | 7 | 14 | — | 56 |

Team Stats

| | LATECH | NU |
|-----------------------|--------|-------|
| First Downs | 25 | 29 |
| Rushing | 1 | 17 |
| Passing | 22 | 6 |
| Penalty | 2 | 6 |
| Rushing Attempts | 14 | 56 |
| Yards Gained Rushing | 34 | 302 |
| Yards Lost Rushing | 55 | 13 |
| Net Yards Rushing | -21 | 289 |
| Net Yards Passing | 590 | 173 |
| Passes Attempted | 68 | 13 |
| Passes Completed | 46 | 10 |
| Had Intercepted | 1 | 0 |
| Total Plays | 82 | 69 |
| Total Net Yards | 569 | 462 |
| Avg. Gain Per Play | 6.9 | 6.7 |
| Fumbles-Lost | 3-0 | 3-1 |
| Penalties-Yards | 12-88 | 5-49 |
| Punts-Yards | 3-110 | 2-79 |
| Avg. Per Punt | 36.7 | 39.5 |
| Punt Returns-Yards | 0-0 | 1-5 |
| Interceptions-Yards | 0-0 | 1-32 |
| Fumble Returns-Yards | 0-0 | 0-0 |
| Kickoff Returns-Yards | 2-33 | 5-182 |
| Possession Time | 27:56 | 32:04 |



Willie Miller and the Huskers ran wild over the Louisiana Tech Bulldogs for an impressive 56-27 victory.

Individual Leaders

NEBRASKA

| Name | Att. | Yds. | YPC | LNG | TD |
|----------------|------|------|------|-----|----|
| Buckhalter, C. | 19 | 143 | 7.5 | 43 | 2 |
| Makovicka, J. | 10 | 47 | 4.7 | 14 | 0 |
| Alexander, D. | 8 | 24 | 3.0 | 5 | 1 |
| Miller, W. | 3 | 24 | 8.0 | 10 | 1 |
| Wiggins, S. | 2 | 20 | 10.0 | 12 | 0 |
| Brown, L. | 1 | 13 | 13.0 | 13 | 0 |
| Newcombe, B. | 12 | 12 | 1.0 | 7 | 2 |
| Crouch, E. | 1 | 6 | 6.0 | 6 | 0 |

| Name | C-A-I | Pct. | Yds. | TD |
|--------------|--------|------|------|----|
| Newcombe, B. | 9-10-0 | 90.0 | 168 | 1 |
| Crouch, E. | 1-3-0 | 33.3 | 5 | 0 |

| Name | No. | Yds. | YPC | LNG | TD |
|----------------|-----|------|------|-----|----|
| Cheatham, K. | 3 | 19 | 6.3 | 11 | 0 |
| Jackson, S. | 2 | 94 | 47.0 | 48 | 1 |
| Davison, M. | 2 | 21 | 10.5 | 11 | 0 |
| Debates, T.J. | 1 | 16 | 16.0 | 16 | 0 |
| Buckhalter, C. | 1 | 12 | 12.0 | 12 | 0 |
| Brown, L. | 1 | 11 | 11.0 | 11 | 0 |

| Name | Att. | Good | LNG |
|-----------|------|------|-----|
| Brown, K. | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| Name | No. | Yds. | YPR | LNG | TD |
|------------|-----|------|-----|-----|----|
| Walker, J. | 1 | 5 | 5.0 | 5 | 0 |

| Name | No. | Yds. | YPR | LNG | TD |
|------------|-----|------|------|-----|----|
| Walker, J. | 5 | 182 | 34.4 | 99 | 1 |

| Name | UT | AT | TT | FL | Int. | Sacks |
|------------------|----|----|----|------|------|-------|
| Johnson, E. | 2 | 7 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Brown, M. | 3 | 5 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Brown, R. | 7 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Swiney, E. | 4 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Foreman, J. | 2 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kelsay, C. | 4 | 1 | 5 | 1-10 | 0 | 1-10 |
| Walker, J. | 4 | 1 | 5 | 1-5 | 0 | 0 |
| Vanden Bosch, K. | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2-18 | 0 | 1-13 |
| Wills, A. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Warren, S. | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Wiltz, J. | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |

LOUISIANA TECH

| Name | Att. | Yds. | YPC | LNG | TD |
|-------------|------|------|-------|-------|----|
| Johnson, K. | 2 | 9 | 4.5 | 6 | 0 |
| Edwards, T. | 1 | 6 | 6.0 | 6 | 0 |
| Tell, B. | 4 | 5 | 1.3 | 4 | 0 |
| Rattay, T. | 6 | -22 | -3.7 | 6 | 0 |
| Team | 1 | -19 | -19.0 | -19.0 | 0 |

| Name | C-A-I | Pct. | Yds. | TD |
|------------|---------|------|------|----|
| Rattay, T. | 46-68-1 | 67.6 | 590 | 4 |

| Name | No. | Yds. | YPC | LNG | TD |
|---------------|-----|------|------|-----|----|
| Edwards, T. | 21 | 405 | 19.3 | 94 | 3 |
| Jordan, J. | 8 | 45 | 5.6 | 10 | 0 |
| Cangelosi, S. | 5 | 57 | 11.4 | 27 | 1 |
| Daigre, D. | 5 | 25 | 5.0 | 9 | 0 |
| Simon, J. | 3 | 36 | 12.0 | 21 | 0 |
| Newman, D. | 1 | 8 | 8.0 | 8 | 0 |
| Jenkins, P. | 1 | 7 | 7.0 | 7 | 0 |
| Hampton, S. | 1 | 4 | 4.0 | 4 | 0 |
| Williams, C. | 1 | 3 | 3.0 | 3 | 0 |

| Name | Att. | Good | LNG |
|----------|------|------|-----|
| Pond, K. | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| Name | No. | Yds. | YPR | LNG | TD |
|------|-----|------|-----|-----|----|
| none | | | | | |

| Name | No. | Yds. | YPR | LNG | TD |
|-------------|-----|------|------|-----|----|
| Edwards, T. | 1 | 13 | 13.0 | 13 | 0 |
| Johnson, K. | 1 | 20 | 20.0 | 20 | 0 |

| Name | UT | AT | TT | FL | Int. | Sacks |
|----------------|----|----|----|-----|------|-------|
| Harrington, D. | 6 | 9 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Wright, L. | 4 | 7 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Pitts, O. | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Procel, J. | 0 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Stewart, Q. | 1 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Alofipo, S. | 1 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Pernetter, R. | 2 | 4 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Nunnery, D. | 0 | 5 | 5 | 1-6 | 0 | 1-6 |
| King, J. | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Gray, B. | 1 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lloyd, R. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Ford, M. | 0 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Lewis, F. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Clark, M. | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

'98 SEASON STATS

RUSHING

| Name | G | Att. | Yds. | YPG | TD |
|----------------|---|------|------|------|----|
| Buckhalter, C. | 1 | 19 | 143 | 7.5 | 2 |
| Makovicka, J. | 1 | 10 | 47 | 4.7 | 0 |
| Alexander, D. | 1 | 8 | 24 | 3.0 | 1 |
| Miller, W. | 1 | 3 | 24 | 8.0 | 1 |
| Wiggins, S. | 1 | 2 | 20 | 10.0 | 0 |
| Brown, L. | 1 | 1 | 13 | 13.0 | 0 |
| Newcombe, B. | 1 | 12 | 12 | 1.0 | 2 |
| Crouch, E. | 1 | 1 | 6 | 6.0 | 0 |

PASSING

| Name | G | C-A-I | Pct. | Yds. | TD |
|--------------|---|--------|------|------|----|
| Newcombe, B. | 1 | 9-10-0 | 90.0 | 168 | 1 |
| Crouch, E. | 1 | 1-3-0 | 33.3 | 5 | 0 |

RECEIVING

| Name | G | No. | Yds. | YPC | YPG | TD |
|----------------|---|-----|------|------|------|----|
| Cheatham, K. | 1 | 3 | 19 | 6.3 | 19 | 0 |
| Jackson, S. | 1 | 2 | 94 | 47.0 | 94.0 | 1 |
| Davison, M. | 1 | 2 | 21 | 10.5 | 21.0 | 0 |
| Debates, T.J. | 1 | 1 | 16 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 0 |
| Buckhalter, C. | 1 | 1 | 12 | 12.0 | 12.0 | 0 |
| Brown, L. | 1 | 1 | 11 | 11.0 | 11.0 | 0 |

FIELD GOALS

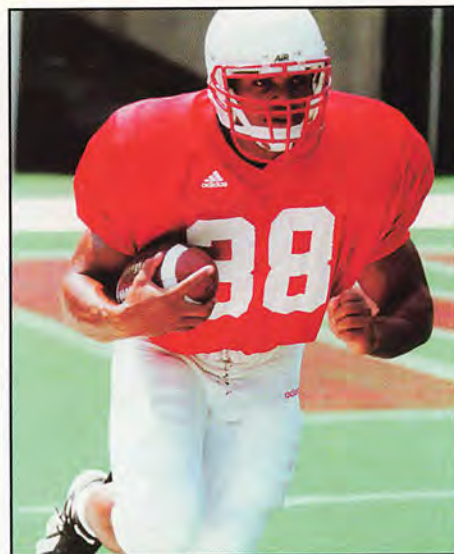
| Name | G | Att. | Good | Long |
|-----------|---|------|------|------|
| Brown, K. | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

DEFENSE

| Name | G | UT | AT | TT | FL | Int. | S/Yds. |
|------------------|---|----|----|----|------|------|--------|
| Johnson, E. | 1 | 2 | 7 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Brown, M. | 1 | 3 | 5 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Brown, R. | 1 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Swiney, E. | 1 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Foreman, J. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kelsay, C. | 1 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 1-10 | 0 | 1-10 |
| Walker, J. | 1 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 1-5 | 0 | 0 |
| Vanden Bosch, K. | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2-18 | 0 | 1-13 |
| Wills, A. | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Warren, S. | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Wiltz, J. | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Jackson, J. | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Reynolds, K. | 1 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Kaiser, L. | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1-3 | 0 | 1-3 |
| Ortiz, T. | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Vedral, M. | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Raymond, S. | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Rucker, M. | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

TEAM STATISTICS

| | NU | OPP |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|
| Total Offensive Yards | 462 | 569 |
| Plays | 69 | 82 |
| Average Per Play | 6.7 | 6.9 |
| Average Per Game | 462.0 | 569.0 |
| Net Rushing Yards | 289 | -21 |
| Attempts | 56 | 14 |
| TDs Rushing | 6 | 0 |
| Net Passing Yards | 173 | 590 |
| Completions | 10 | 46 |
| Average Per Pass | 13.3 | 8.7 |
| Average Per Catch | 17.3 | 12.8 |
| Average Per Game | 173.0 | 590.0 |
| TDs Passing | 1 | 4 |
| Sacks By-Yards | 3-26 | 1-6 |
| Fumbles-Lost | 3-1 | 3-0 |
| Penalties-Yards | 5-49 | 12-88 |
| Scoring | 14 | 21 |
| NU | 14 | 21 |
| Opponents | 0 | 6 |
| | 15 | 6 |
| | 0 | 27 |



Dan Alexander rushed for 24 yards and one touchdown in the Huskers' season-opening win.

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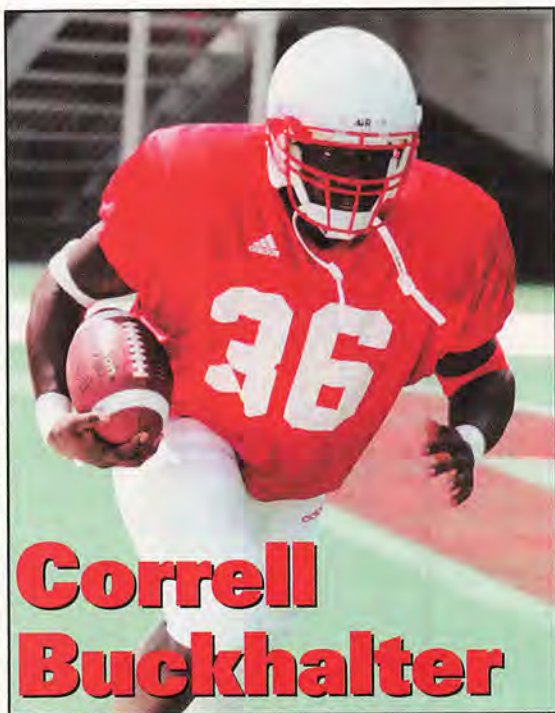
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PLAYER PROFILE



Scott Bruhn

If sophomore I-back Correll Buckhalter had wanted to stay close to home, he could have gone to Southern Mississippi. The school, which is on Nebraska's schedule next season, is located in Hattiesburg, about 20 minutes south and a little east of where Buckhalter went to high school.

Buckhalter's brother, Chris, played football at Southern Mississippi.

Green Bay Packers quarterback Brett Favre also went to Southern Mississippi. Favre grew up in Pass Christian, Miss., which is about an hour and a half away.

And NFL Hall of Famer Walter Payton is from Columbia, Miss., just west of Hattiesburg.

Favre, Payton and former Oklahoma tailback Marcus Dupree, who is from Philadelphia, Miss., and began at Southern Mississippi, are the players Buckhalter followed as a youngster.

They were "the guys I heard about who were successful," Buckhalter said recently.

Considering Mississippi has produced such talented football players, as well as many others, it stands to reason that Nebraska would recruit one from there now and then.

Buckhalter wasn't the first, but there haven't been many. Percy Eichelberger and Willie Thornton, who lettered in the mid-1970s, were from Louisville,

Miss., and Amory, Miss., respectively. And Jim Burrow, a letterman in 1974-75, transferred from Mississippi.

That was about the extent of Mississippi's influence on Cornhusker football until Buckhalter arrived following a multi-sport career at Collins High. In addition to earning all-3A and all-state honors in football, he competed in basketball and track and field.

Buckhalter, who also considered Arkansas, Florida State, Baylor and Notre Dame, as well as Southern Mississippi, was sold on the Cornhuskers when he made his recruiting visit.

"It was amazing the facilities they had," Buckhalter said. "The facilities really caught my attention, and so did the academic program they had.

"But it was hard because I was worried about being away from home, knowing I would be 14 hours away. If I came to Nebraska, I wouldn't be able to see my people when I wanted to."

Growing up in Mississippi, Buckhalter knew little about Nebraska football until the Cornhuskers began recruiting him. "I heard about them, but to be quite honest, I didn't follow them," he said.

"I knew they were a winning team and had a winning tradition. When they started recruiting me, I paid more attention, started thinking about the things they did here. I think I was blessed to be one of the first players out of Mississippi, and my little town, to come up here and play for the Cornhuskers."

With DeAngelo Evans sidelined all of last season by a pelvic-related injury, Buckhalter worked his way into the mix behind Ahman Green.

In Nebraska's first two games, he carried a combined 22 times for 143 yards and four touchdowns. He also scored two touchdowns against Oklahoma, and finished the season with 311 rushing yards.

At first, "I was kind of intimidated, coming into college and everything, because it's a different level," he said. "You can't just come in expecting that

you can just run over everybody. It wasn't probably until after the second game that I felt if Coach asked me to do something, I could get in there and do it.

"I'm 110 percent more comfortable now. I had to get adjusted to the environment, and I had to get adjusted to the new system. Now I've been here a year, and I've adjusted well. And I have experience at the position."

That experience last season was a factor in his starting this year's opener against Louisiana Tech, after Evans was sidelined by a cartilage tear in a knee during the next-to-last scrimmage of fall camp.

Buckhalter downplayed the starting opportunity because it came at the expense of a friend.

"It hurts when you see Jello (DeAngelo) out like that," the soft-spoken Buckhalter said after the final pre-season scrimmage. "He's already been out for 16 months, and now he's got to be out three more weeks before he can be on the field again.

"Right before the scrimmage, he encouraged me to get out there and get the job done. Don't worry about him, he'll be all right. He'll have surgery, do his best to rehab and get back."

The surgery was performed the next day, and the initial thought was that Evans would miss three weeks.

Buckhalter had to be prodded into discussing his first collegiate start. "It's a pretty good feeling," he finally admitted. But he added, "I don't want to make it sound like I'm cocky."

He planned to call home and tell his family "we're going to be on TV and that Jello had a slight injury, so I have to start. But it won't be anything like I'm getting a big head," he said.

The heat was oppressive on the day of the final scrimmage. The temperature and the humidity both were in the 90s. But Buckhalter didn't mind, despite being soaked in sweat like everyone else.

"It's a lot hotter than this in Mississippi," he said. "The heat doesn't bother me."

He was speaking literally. But his words could have been taken figuratively as well.

Starting at I-back for a defending national champion can be a hot responsibility for a young player.

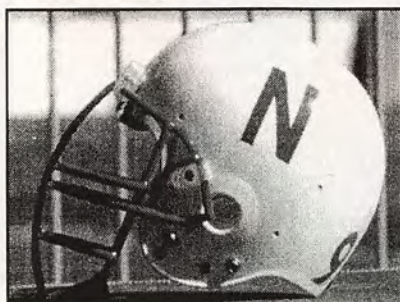
But Buckhalter has proven he can take the heat. ■

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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

NU's Top 10 QBs

Eventually, Bobby Newcombe, and perhaps Eric Crouch, might be included among the best quarterbacks to ever play for Nebraska. But that's for the future. In the meantime, Huskers Illustrated has picked its 10 best since the Bob Devaney era. See if you agree.

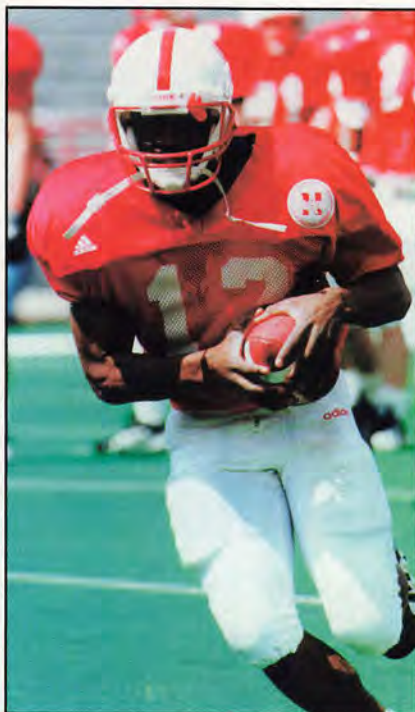
Bobby Newcombe seemed unaffected by the expectations on himself and the Nebraska football team when he met with reporters on the Cornhuskers' media day the first week in August.

As always, he was soft-spoken, and his glasses gave him a studious air.

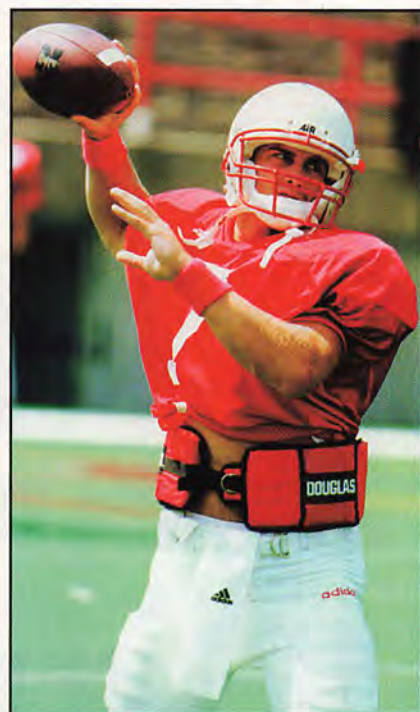
"There's going to be a lot of expectations, regardless of whether you're off a defending national championship season or not," he said. "This is Nebraska, and they do well every year."

Nebraska has done extremely well in recent seasons, winning the national championship in 1994, 1995 and 1997. And in each of those seasons, the quarterbacks have gotten much of the credit.

Tommie Frazier, Brook Berringer and Matt Turman combined to get the job done in 1994. Frazier was healthy



Bobby Newcombe and Eric Crouch are both outstanding runners, which is very important to an option attack that has evolved into the nation's best rushing offense over the last 20 years.



Scott Bruhn

throughout 1995. And Scott Frost responded to his detractors by becoming only the 10th player in major college history to rush and pass for 1,000 yards in the same season in 1997.

Those quarterbacks have set the standard by which Newcombe will be measured.

The sophomore from Albuquerque, N.M., took only a handful of snaps before moving to wingback last season. "As far as being nervous coming into the season, I don't feel any nervousness whatsoever because I know that the coaches will prepare us for a game and that we'll be ready to play," Newcombe said. The "we" to whom he referred are backups, including red-shirt freshman Eric Crouch.

Though both will benefit from continued competition, they now have a common goal.

"During spring ball, everybody was worried about how they played in practice, how they matched up against the other quarterbacks. It was competition between us," said Newcombe. "Now, it's a lot more working toward the season and not (being) focused on each individual person."

Despite their lack of experi-

ence, "I believe that is a very strong position," coach Frank Solich said. "I think it will prove out to be an outstanding position. They are both very mature young men."

"I see them as guys who have gone above and beyond when it came time to study the game of football, just opening up their playbook, watching film on their own, doing the things over the course of the summer that will put them in position to be really excellent quarterbacks."

Nebraska's quarterbacks must combine athletic ability with football intelligence because of "all the audibling we do," said Solich. "The mental aspect of the game (is) very important to us."

Newcombe and Crouch are both outstanding runners, which is very important to an option attack that has evolved into the nation's best rushing offense over the last 20 years.

Early in Tom Osborne's tenure as head coach, the offense was considerably more pass-oriented.

"At one point, we were recruiting quarterbacks primarily for their throwing ability," Osborne said recently. "Then we began to recruit quarterbacks . . . we wanted them to be good throwers if possible."

FIELD GENERALS

| | |
|-----------------|---------|
| Dennis Claridge | 1961-63 |
| Bob Churchich | 1964-66 |
| Jerry Tagge | 1969-71 |
| Dave Humm | 1972-74 |
| Vince Ferragamo | 1975-76 |
| Turner Gill | 1980-83 |
| Steve Taylor | 1985-88 |
| Gerry Gdowski | 1987-89 |
| Tommie Frazier | 1992-95 |
| Scott Frost | 1996-97 |

"But we wanted them, above all, to be good athletes and good runners."

Newcombe and Crouch qualify in both of those areas.

Oklahoma was the pattern for that change.

"We went through a series of difficult experiences with Oklahoma," said Osborne. "The first five or six years I was the head coach, we had two or three instances where we had them on the ropes, had a pretty good shot at them, and they had a quarterback who would scramble on third down, run an option, make a big play. Quite often, it had to do with athleticism and (it would) bail them out."

"So I think it was along about 1979, 1980, that I became convinced the best way to win college football games, particularly if you had to beat Oklahoma, was to have someone with athleticism and speed at quarterback. So we began to look for speed as a basic prerequisite of the whole deal."

Ironically, Oklahoma, which has fallen on hard times, has returned to the option offense it discarded in the late 1980s in hopes of returning to the national prominence it once enjoyed.

That's, in part, a reflection of Nebraska's success.

"If you look at a lot of the offenses in the Big 12 right now, you see a lot of similarity to what we're doing," Solich said.

And to do well what the Cornhuskers are doing requires an exceptional athlete at quarterback.

"You look at the quarterbacks around this conference and I don't think you'll find another conference that has the skilled athletes as what this conference has at the quarterback spot," said Solich.

"It is a conference of great quarterbacks, as I see it, including ours in there."

With that in mind, *Huskers Illustrated* will feature in this season's issues Nebraska's 10 best quarterbacks since Bob Devaney's first season as head coach in 1962.

They will be presented chronologically in order to avoid controversy. Comparing Dennis Claridge and Bob Churchich to Turner Gill and Steve Taylor would be impossible given the changes in the game as well as in the Cornhuskers' offense. Claridge, for example, occasionally played defense, too.

The time frame is arbitrary, of course, but could be considered the modern era.

10 QUESTIONS

Huskers Illustrated talks with offensive lineman JOSH HESKEW

1 Prettier landscape — Oklahoma (Heskew's home state) or Nebraska?
Oklahoma. We have the red dirt, better colors.

2 Who are the biggest trash-talkers you've faced?

Probably either (teammates) Mike Rucker or Jay Foreman. That's all they do is talk. They're always out there chatting about someone or to someone. They'll say, "Hey fat boy, you gonna snap the ball on the right count?" I just laugh.

3 What's your favorite place to play on the road?

Probably Oklahoma, to tell you the truth, because we always go there and kill them. It's a good time for me. They (the Sooners) didn't want me; I was too small and not good enough for them. But now we get to go back to the field and whup up on them.

4 Who's your favorite NFL player of all time?

Joe Montana, just because he's the man. You can't find a better quarterback when it came down to clutch situations. I still don't think there's a quarterback out there now who can do what he did. I'm a 49ers fan, big time.

5 Better with the ladies — linemen or skill position players?

Believe it or not, it's linemen. You see more of them getting married, so they must be getting the women. The skill-position players must not be getting anybody because I don't see them with any women. So there you go.

6 Do you want to see Mark McGwire pass Roger Maris?

I want him to, but he probably won't. They'll probably end up walking him all the time.

7 What's your favorite sports memory growing up?

I think it would be one of my own when I was playing little league ball. I played noseguard. It seemed like the opposition always put the shortest, fattest little kid at center to snap the ball. Every time I'd get up there and starting beating up on him, he'd start crying.

8 President Clinton — effective leader or washed up?

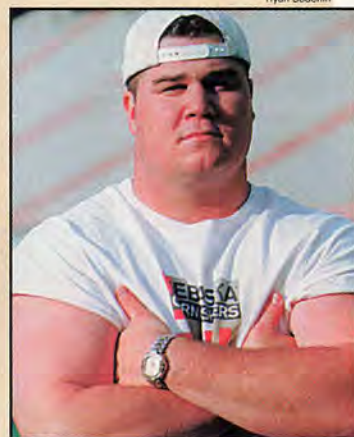
I think he's an effective leader. He's probably getting caught for something that probably every president has done. You have to look at that. His personal life doesn't affect how he runs the country.

9 What was your most embarrassing moment as a freshman in college?

It happened when I got in my first fight with (ex-Husker) Christian Peter when I was on the scout team. It was embarrassing, because I just got whupped and didn't fight back. I just ran away with my tail between my legs. He came after me, and I grabbed my helmet and took off.

10 Who's the toughest lineman you've faced?

(Ex-Husker) Jason Peter. He was so quick, and if he didn't beat you with his quickness, he beat you with his strength. When you have that combination, phew. Some people have one or the other, but he had both. If he couldn't get you with his quickness, he could just bullrush you any where he wanted to go. He's the best I've ever seen. Plus, he never took a play off. He was always there. ■



Josh Heskew has seen enough of the Peter brothers — Christian and Jason.

Newcombe was asked if he had consulted with any former Nebraska quarterbacks as he prepared for his first season as the Cornhuskers' starter.

"Well, actually, I talk to a former Husker quarterback all the time, coach Turner Gill," he said with a smile. Gill, of course, is Newcombe's position

coach.

"I've spoken to a few of them, I guess," said Newcombe. "I talk to Tommie Frazier a little bit, over the phone once in a while. He tells me there's definitely going to be a lot of pressures."

But those pressures don't seem to intimidate him in the least. ■

Just when everyone, including DeAngelo Evans, thought his football days were over, a "miracle" recovery and determination has the sophomore ready to overcome another setback and get back on the field

Faith Healer



DEANGELO EVANS BECAME so discouraged at one point that he considered changing his major. He even went so far as to discuss the possibility with athletic department academic counselors.

"I wanted a tougher major, so hopefully I could make more money," he said.

His major is communication studies, which he chose because he thought it could benefit him "later on," after what he hoped would be a playing career in the National Football League.

Long about June of 1997, however, the sophomore I-back began to doubt he would ever play at Nebraska again, much less in the NFL. "After I had my first surgery, that was the lowest spot," he told a handful of reporters at a news conference before the start of

two-a-day practices. "A lot of doubt crept in. I could feel it from others, too. That's the scary thing. You could see it in somebody else.

"I'm very thankful for all the support I got around here, but you could just tell."

The surgery to which he referred was to correct a mysterious pelvic-related injury that began bothering him midway through his freshman season at Nebraska. He would undergo another surgery for the injury in October of 1997, and he would be unable to work out for the better part of 16 months.

Frank Solich, his position coach at the time, was among those who began to wonder if Evans would ever be healthy enough to return. "There was a major concern about that," said

Solich. "I thought at one point in time that he would have a very difficult time, maybe, coming off the surgery and being able to play again. The longer it got to where he was pain-free, the more I thought that maybe he would not be able to play. And I think DeAngelo felt that at one time also.

"But I'm glad, (and) he's glad, that's not been the case."

Glad doesn't quite express how Evans feels.

"I'm like a kid in a candy store," he said.

That's good news for Nebraska, which is trying to rebuild its running game with an inexperienced offensive line and an inexperienced quarterback.

A healthy Evans would help compensate for the loss of

Scott Bruhn

Ahman Green, who opted to bypass his final season of eligibility in favor of the NFL.

And all indications at the start of two-a-day practices were that he was healthy.

Evans began fall practice as he had finished the spring, sharing the top spot on the depth chart with sophomores Correll Buckhalter and Dan Alexander.

"I think they all showed well enough this spring that we don't want to count any of them out," said Solich. "But DeAngelo, if he plays like he did as a true freshman, which we expect to

happen, certainly would be a tremendous challenge to beat out (as the starter)."

Despite starting only one game as a freshman, Evans rushed for 776 yards and 14 touchdowns. He rushed for 168 yards against Kansas State, 123 yards against Colorado and 130 yards against Texas, even though he estimates he was only about "50 percent" because of the pelvic injury.

"I don't know how I was able to play. But we didn't have any other way."

Green, the regular starter, and Damon Benning were both ailing.

"It wasn't like they (the coaches) were forcing me to do it," said Evans, who carried 32 times, caught six passes for 42 yards and scored three touchdowns that afternoon in St. Louis.

He hasn't played a down since then, though he did participate in scrimmages in the spring, which was "like a four-game season, with scrimmages every week. I was a little bit rusty," he said.

"But at the end of May, or (the beginning of) June, it was fine. I'm not worried about returning to my freshman form. I just want to play the way I can play. Everything else will fall into place."

Evans describes his recovery as a "miracle." The experience has strengthened his religious faith.



Scott Bruhn

A knee injury will delay DeAngelo Evans' comeback for at least the first three Nebraska contests this season, but he feels that his faith and determination will enable him to get back on the field as soon as possible.

"I can't explain it," he said. "I prayed. I cried. I'm not ashamed to say it. I was embarrassed, frustrated. In my mind, I was questioning. I could doubt, too. I didn't know what was going on.

"I was afraid. But I had faith in God. Having doubts about yourself and having faith in God are two different things. I was going to trust in God and hopefully, everything would get better."

Everything did get better, overnight it seemed. Evans remembers exactly. It was March 13, when he worked out for Solich and Doak Ostergard, the head football trainer, at Cook Pavilion.

"I think they were really encouraged by it," Evans said.

Solich was encouraged enough to allow Evans to begin practicing in the spring.

"I think Coach Solich was hesitant at first," he said. "But I didn't have any pain. I felt fine."

In addition to his faith and his own dedication, Evans relied on Solich, former head coach Tom Osborne and Brian Bailey, the Cornhuskers' coordinator of reconditioning, during his

recovery.

"I'd get some one-on-one help (from Bailey)," said Evans. "Coach Osborne talked to me two or three times pretty extensively. That's what I appreciate about this program."

His appearance in the spring game, during which he suffered a minor ankle sprain, drew enthusiastic cheers. "It made me cry," he said. "I felt like I belonged again. That's the biggest thing."

Once he had recovered, Evans began pushing himself to be ready for this season.

"I really worked hard in the summer, a lot of leg training," he said. "My legs are stronger than they've ever been."

Even though he received a national championship ring, which he wears on occasion, there were times when he didn't feel like a part of the team. That feeling was never more intense than when he was at home in Wichita, Kan., watching on television as Nebraska played in the

Orange Bowl game against Tennessee.

"I wanted to be on the field for the Tennessee game, Coach Osborne's last game," he said.

In any case, "I appreciate football a lot more," Evans said. "Some guys complain (about practice). I'm just happy to be doing it, not in street clothes watching."

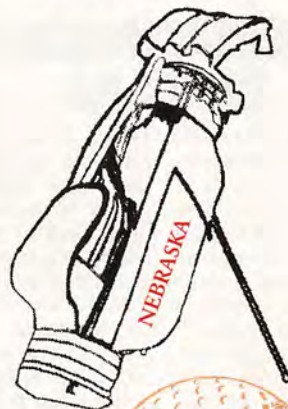
For Evans, however, he will have to watch at least the first three Nebraska games in street clothes after suffering a slight tear to his left lateral meniscus during a scrimmage two weeks ago. He underwent arthroscopic surgery on Aug. 22.

In typical Evans fashion, he refused to let the injury get him down, vowing to return to the Husker backfield as soon as possible.

"I plan to be back for the Washington game (Sept. 26) at the latest — hopefully sooner," Evans said after being injured. "It doesn't sound too serious."

After what Evans endured over the last year, this most recent setback will be a true test of his faith. Judging by the inner strength he has demonstrated in recent months, it is a test he should pass with flying colors. ■

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Blue-chip running backs eye Nebraska

RUMORS

Nebraska already has a verbal commitment from one of the top running backs in the country in **Josh Davis** of Loveland, Colo. However, every big-time running back in the country knows that Nebraska is one of the top programs in the country for running the football. So, it's not surprising when **Nick Maddox** of Kannapolis (Brown), N.C., the top running back in the country, says he's got the Huskers among his top three along with North Carolina and Florida State. Notre Dame, Florida and Duke are also on his list.

William Green of Absecon (Holy Spirit), N.J., is another dynamite running back who is eyeing the Cornhuskers. Green is an AAU weightlifting champion who has already been offered scholarships by North Carolina, Penn State, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Florida State and Georgia.

Tony Milton of Tallahassee, Fla., is a mighty-mite who loves what Nebraska is doing in the backfield. Milton could be a tailback or a wingback after rushing for 1,980 yards and 26 TDs last season. Milton says he's always loved Nebraska and has the Cornhuskers out in front of Michigan, Clemson, Auburn, Florida State, Miami and Syracuse.

Nebraska always attracts some great offensive line prospects too, and this year is no exception. **Shane Lehmann** of Corona, Calif., is one of the best on the West Coast and is a prototype guard or center prospect. Lehmann has received scholarship offers from over 20 schools. He has UCLA out in front of Notre Dame, Nebraska, Ohio State and USC early. The Huskers may have a better shot at **Rodney Leisle** of Bakersfield (Ridgeview), Calif. Leisle went to the Nebraska football camp this summer and drew offers from the Huskers along with Washington and Colorado. Nebraska has the slight lead right now.

Everybody is on the lookout for great defensive tackles and one of the very best is **Walter Young** of Purvis, Miss. Young had 60 solo stops, 48 assisted and seven sacks last season. Young may also land in the pro baseball draft after hitting .450 with 17 homers last season. Mississippi and LSU are the early leaders, but Nebraska is closing fast with Florida, Mississippi State and Auburn.

Texas still leads the Big 12 in early commitments with 13, followed by Nebraska (6) and Colorado (3). On the national level, Ohio State has 13, with Michigan State (12) and Indiana (8) right behind them. ■

Prime Time QBs Keep Options Open

Nation's top option quarterbacks have Nebraska high on their list of prospective schools

By James HALE

Nebraska has several excellent selling points when it comes to recruiting athletic quarterbacks.

First, the Huskers run a type of offense that most teams in the country don't run. It's a multiple option offense that requires a signal caller who possesses excellent running ability, as well as a strong arm to make things happen in the passing game to keep defenses honest.

Secondly, the Cornhuskers are one of the top option football teams in the country, a fact that always puts them in a position to recruit the nation's top prep option quarterbacks. Every year, Nebraska searches out the top ten run/pass quarterbacks in the land, and in the end, always seems to have a legitimate shot at signing five of the ten.

Finally, every run/pass quarterback in the country knows that if he is good enough to be offered a scholarship by the Huskers, then he is good enough to lead them to a national title. Let's face it—the Huskers' fate in national title land often lies within the hands of those who are under center. If the Cornhuskers quarterback is elite, then Nebraska more than likely will be in the national title hunt. If he's just good, then the Huskers will have to be great elsewhere for them to chase the national title.

That is why, no matter who the Cornhuskers already have on campus, they always still chase quarterbacks on the prep level. The Huskers already have young quarterbacks on the roster, but they didn't sign one in last year's recruiting class. That situation is always an enticement for any prep quarterback. The fact that he is separated by one year from the last recruited quarterback is always a positive selling point.

Nebraska has been able to venture

into Oklahoma the past few years and steal away a prime prospect. The Huskers will attempt to do that again this year.

Chris Massey (6-foot-1, 198 pounds, with 4.4 speed in the 40-yard dash) of Spiro, Okla., is considered by many as the top run/pass option quarterback in the country. He's got all the tools. Massey has size, speed, strength, a strong arm and the ability to make defenders miss.

"I would like to think that I can do a lot of things out on a football field," said Massey. "In fact, many college coaches tell me that I can play just about any skill position on the field and I wouldn't mind playing defensive back or wide receiver. However, I want a shot at playing quarterback and most colleges are looking at me in that position."

Massey's numbers prove that he



One of the top run/pass quarterback in the nation, Chris Massey of Spiro, Okla., would like the opportunity to remain a quarterback in college.

can play quarterback. A two-year starter, Massey rushed for 784 yards and nine touchdowns last season while completing 102 of 163 passes for 1,890 yards and 15 touchdowns against 11 interceptions. For his career, Massey has rushed for 1,683 yards and 21 touchdowns, while adding another 3,513 yards and 37 touchdowns through the air.

However, those that like Massey in the secondary point to the 234 career tackles and seven interceptions he has recorded on defense. They also point to the fact that he's run a 10.6-second 100-meter dash and a 22.3 in the 200. Coaches at Spiro say that Massey has hands with permanent sticky stuff on them, leading them to believe that he could be the best wide receiver in the state.

Massey is keeping an open mind concerning recruiting, despite the fact that he does admit he's leaning toward staying close to home. It remains to be seen whether Nebraska is close enough or not, but Massey says there is no question about his interest in the Cornhusker football program.

"Nebraska runs the same offense that we run here at Spiro, and that is something that I am looking for," said Massey. "They always feature a running quarterback but pass just enough to take advantage of his abilities there. Their tradition is incredible and they are the winningest team in college football right now, and that is something nobody else can beat."

Just further south, the next best run/pass quarterback is **Colby Freeman** (6-3, 210, 4.55) of Brownwood, Texas. Like Massey, Freeman is blessed with great athletic ability and all the tools. He has great height, size, speed and a cannon for an arm. A very disciplined coach's son, Freeman is a no-nonsense type of player. A dedicated practice player, Freeman's hard work has paid off as he has a career passing total of 2,247 yards and career rushing mark of 2,388 yards.

Those are the numbers of the prototypical run/pass quarterback.

Freeman went to camps this summer at Nebraska, Texas and Texas A&M and admits he came away with three different points of view on college football. Texas and Texas A&M appear to be in a dead heat in-state race for Freeman's services, and at the moment, he is leaning toward

REP REPORT

Keeping Up With COLBY FREEMAN

I GUESS EVERYBODY starts out slow the first week of two-a-days, and we aren't any exception. We have really concentrated on the fundamentals and reads on offense and, toward the end of the week, we have really picked things up. We are getting in and out of the huddle better, working from play to play. We have a young offensive line so they are learning a lot of new things, but seem to be picking things up pretty well.

Everything is going pretty well right now. Our defense is looking good, and our offensive execution with the veer in the option is the main thing, so being able to get the reads, linemen getting their blocks and running backs and receivers making plays are things that seem to be coming together for us.

I thought I was in pretty good shape before I put the pads on. We had four workouts where we were just in helmets, shorts and shirts. And as soon as we strapped it on, I thought I was going to be OK, but towards the end of practice I was sucking air pretty bad. So, I found out pretty quick that I wasn't in near as good a shape as I thought I was. That's pretty much with everybody, but the more we practice, our coaches really stress that through the practices, if we work hard, we are going to get into the game shape that we need.

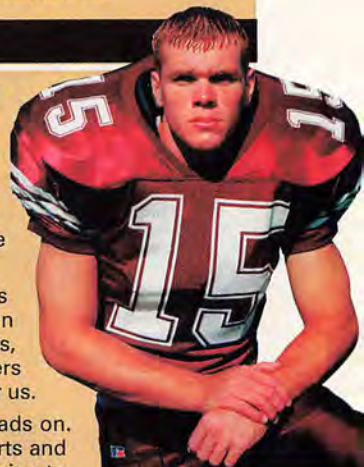
My dad is my football coach and that has been an interesting ride, to say the least. I guess my eighth grade year, towards the end of the school year, my dad was hired here at Brownwood. The head coach was W.D. Stapler and he came from Carlsbad, N.M., with the intent of changing our program around. My freshman year was my first year on varsity and Coach Stapler started me at quarterback and my dad was the defensive coordinator. So, there wasn't a whole lot of contact then between him as a coach and me as a player. We are around each other quite a bit, but the true contact like we have now wasn't there.

We won eight my freshman year. Then my sophomore year, Coach Stapler was still here and we went 10 and 2 and got beat by Denison in the playoffs. That winter Coach Stapler retired and my dad took over as head coach.

From that point until now, we go through the realization that the main thing between us is that we have to keep the things that go on between us at the field house or on the field separate from the things that are important here at the house. My dad is very good at keeping things that go bad at school from coming home. He comes home with a good attitude and takes care of his family. There hasn't been one bad experience between us. Most people think of me as an extension of my father on the field, so that's a good situation for me. I don't want to ever play for another head coach. My dad is the best.

My little brother is in the seventh grade, my sister is in athletics, my mom is great and I feel privileged to have my dad as a head coach. Just being able to go to school and still be in contact with one of your parents is a special treat. ■ — **As told to James Hale**

Throughout the 1998 football season, Huskers Illustrated will chronicle the recruiting process of Brownwood quarterback Colby Freeman, one of the top prospects in Texas.



**Colby
FREEMAN**

staying in Texas; however, if he does leave the state, it appears Nebraska will be his choice.

"When I went to the Nebraska camp, it took me a very short time to realize that they are one of the elite

programs in the country," said Freeman. "Their coaches and players present themselves with such class and they run their camps with such efficiency. I didn't get to spend much time with (Nebraska quarterbacks) Coach (Turner) Gill because there were fifty quarterbacks there and over 400 athletes total. However, I could tell he was an excellent coach, and when I visit, I will get an opportunity to get to know him better."

Freeman still says that Nebraska, Texas and Texas A&M are his top three schools, but he doesn't rule out Tennessee or UCLA yet-

Early Birds

These players have given Nebraska verbal non-binding commitments.

| Name | Pos. | Ht. | Wt. | 40 | High School |
|---------------|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----------------------------------|
| Josh Davis | TB | 6-0 | 194 | 4.4 | Loveland, Colo. |
| Rob Blomeier | QB/DB | 6-0 | 194 | 4.5 | Lancaster (Manheim Township), Pa. |
| Judd Davies | FB | 6-1 | 238 | 4.7 | Omaha (Millard North), Neb. |
| Taylor Gehman | FS | 6-0 | 190 | 4.5 | Omaha (Northwest), Neb. |
| Chris Loos | OL | 6-3 | 275 | 5.4 | Lincoln (Southeast), Neb. |
| Phil Peetz | DT | 6-2 | 250 | 4.9 | Elkhorn, Neb. |

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ting into the picture.

Rufus Brown (5-9, 185, 4.42) of El Paso (Austin), Texas, is a pure option quarterback who is skilled enough athletically to play in the secondary or at wide receiver. Blessed with game-breaking ability, Brown had six touchdown runs of over 70 yards and finished last season with 1,213 yards rushing.

"Rufus is a good option quarter-

"Nebraska always plays athletic quarterbacks and I love that about them."

Quarterback Carl Crawford of Houston (Davis)



back, but he can get his yards in a number of ways," says Austin head coach Michael Perez. "Rufus is great running out of the pocket and great on rollouts. To be honest, I think his best position on the next level is at cornerback, but if whoever signs him keeps him at quarterback and he's in some kind of running or option offense, he would be dynamite there."

Brown says he's keeping an open mind concerning recruiting, but specifically mentioned Rice, Nebraska, OU, Stanford, Florida State and Arizona.

Carl Crawford (6-2, 198, 4.5) of Houston (Davis) is another gifted run/pass quarterback out of the Lone Star state. Not as heralded as Freeman or Brown, Crawford is just as good athletically. A year ago, Crawford rushed for 1,028 yards while passing for another 800 yards.

If Crawford concentrated solely on football, those totals would go up. A starter in basketball, he's drawing recruiting attention after averaging 26 points per game. After basketball season, Crawford switches over to the baseball diamond and hits .583 as their centerfielder. His prowess on the diamond is now drawing attention from major league scouts.

Texas and Texas A&M are at the top of his list, but Nebraska is also in the hunt, along with Florida State, Baylor and OU.

"Nebraska always plays athletic

quarterbacks and I love that about them," said Crawford. "Their quarterbacks are great skill athletes that can play a number of positions. If I couldn't make it at quarterback there, I know that I could play somewhere else, because if they thought enough of me to sign me in the first place to play quarterback, then they think I am a great athlete. All their quarterbacks remind me of myself."

O.J. McClintock (6-3, 194, 4.4) of Austin (Westlake), Texas, also likes Nebraska. McClintock is being recruited as an athlete after rushing for 735 yards and five touchdowns at running back and nabbing 51 catches for 765 yards and five touchdowns at wide receiver. McClintock is still considering a number of schools, including Michigan, UCLA, Baylor, Texas, Kansas, Notre Dame, Texas A&M and Nebraska.

College recruiters love the athletic ability of **C.J. Leak** (6-4, 210, 4.5) of Charlotte (Independence), N.C. Leak has all the intangibles folks are looking for in a quarterback, including his height, strong arm and super mobility. A year ago, Leak hit on 102 of 180 passes for 1,931 yards and 20 touchdowns. Leak has thrown for an amazing 3,464 yards and 35 touchdowns in his career at Independence.

Leak says he is wide open concerning recruiting, but does list Florida State, North Carolina, Nebraska and Tennessee as his top four.

Latrez Harrison (6-2, 198, 4.48) of Atlanta (Washington), Ga., was the key reason his team went 11-1 last season. A tremendous thrower with great speed, Harrison had over 2,000 total yards last season and 21 touchdowns against only six interceptions. Harrison is leaning towards staying in-state with Georgia Tech as the leader, but Nebraska, OU, Syracuse, Auburn, Kentucky, Florida State, Florida and Mississippi State are also getting looks.

Bryson Spinner (6-2, 205, 4.5) of Alexandria Episcopal, Va., fits the Nebraska criteria for a quarterback. He threw for over 700 yards and rushed for 700 yards last season and also letters in basketball and track. Syracuse leads Nebraska, Maryland, Virginia with Michigan and Notre Dame luring in the wings.

All the aforementioned quarterbacks are blue-chip recruits who can write their own ticket. It will be interesting to see who writes one to Lincoln. ■

CAMPUS LIFE

As Seen Through The Eyes Of Kenny Cheatham

AS NEBRASKA'S PRESEASON football camp was coming to a close in the stifling heat of late August, Kenny Cheatham certainly sounded like a player on the brink of a breakthrough season.

"My confidence, it's so high I don't think there's anybody who could hold it down," said the fifth-year senior split end from Phoenix.

Unlike most of his career at Nebraska, the 6-foot-4, 210-pound Cheatham is healthy. Last season, it was an ankle sprain followed by a pulled quadriceps muscle that slowed him. It seems something always has kept Cheatham down.

Plus, until last season, Cheatham fought Nebraska's run-first system. He said it would eat at his insides. Now he goes with the flow.

"I'm more grown up now," he said. "I accept it now."

Despite missing three games last season, Cheatham tied back Ahman Green for the team lead in receptions with 14. Cheatham was third in receiving yards with 191, averaging 13.6 per catch.

He showed flashes of greatness, like when he made three catches during the last-gasp drive against Missouri.

But Nebraska receivers coach Ron Brown wants to see more than just quick, tantalizing bits of brilliance from Cheatham.

"If Kenny remains healthy and plays at the top of his game, there's no reason he can't be one of the best receivers in the country," Brown said. "If he's at the top of his game, he's a major, major threat."

Brown sees Cheatham working hard in the heat and compares his situation to that of former Nebraska quarterbacks Gerry Gdowski and Keithen McCant, players whose greatness didn't emerge until they were seniors.

"All of a sudden, the maturing process kicks in, a player recognizes his responsibility level and captures the moment," Brown said.

Cheatham hopes his moment has arrived.

"My teammates expect a lot from me," he said. "They know I'm healthy now. They're like, 'Kenny is about to go off.' I like that. I don't want to let them down, and I don't want to let myself down."

Brown praised the way Cheatham worked with Nebraska's young receivers during preseason camp. Cheatham feels it's his duty. He clicks off the former Huskers who helped him through his tough times.

"(The late) Brook Berringer would come out for practice and tell me, 'You're going to be the best receiver in the conference,'" Cheatham recalls.

He hasn't reached that level yet. But the potential is there. ■ — *As told to Steve Sipple*



Kenny CHEATHAM

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Kickers Are Athletes, Too

Sure they look bored on the sideline and hardly break a sweat during practice, but Kris Brown and Bill Lafleur have gone to great lengths to break the stereotypes associated with their positions

By Mike BABCOCK

BILL LAFLEUR CAN TAKE the heat when it comes from his roommates — who also are his Nebraska teammates — Joel Makovicka and Ben Gessford.

He'll be watching television after practice, and they'll be lamenting the omnipresent aches and pains that are part of playing football.

"Joel is usually sore," said Lafleur, the Cornhuskers' senior punter. "He's got the token icebag after practice on something: a knee, an elbow, a hamstring, whatever. I'm just kind of sitting there, and they're like, 'Man, when I have kids and they grow up, they're going to be kickers.'"

"We get along well. It's all usually in good fun."

As a result, Lafleur can laugh with them. "I can take it from them because, obviously, I'm not going to lie to people and say we work as hard as everybody else on the team because we don't."

The "we" to whom he referred included senior Kris Brown, Nebraska's place-kicker. Even so, "we work hard, I think, for kickers," Lafleur said, adding: "We have a

lower standard, I guess."

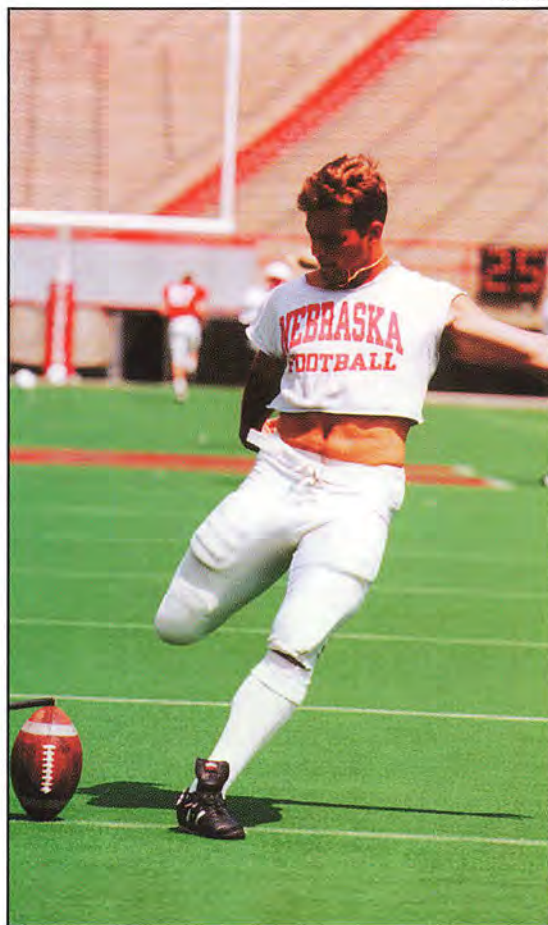
Punters and place-kickers often are maligned for what others perceive as a life of Riley existence. "We both understand that our jobs are not very physically demanding during the season," said Brown, the most prolific place-kicker in school history. "We get out there and kick five minutes a day."

"A lot of our hard work comes mentally. That's something people don't really look at."

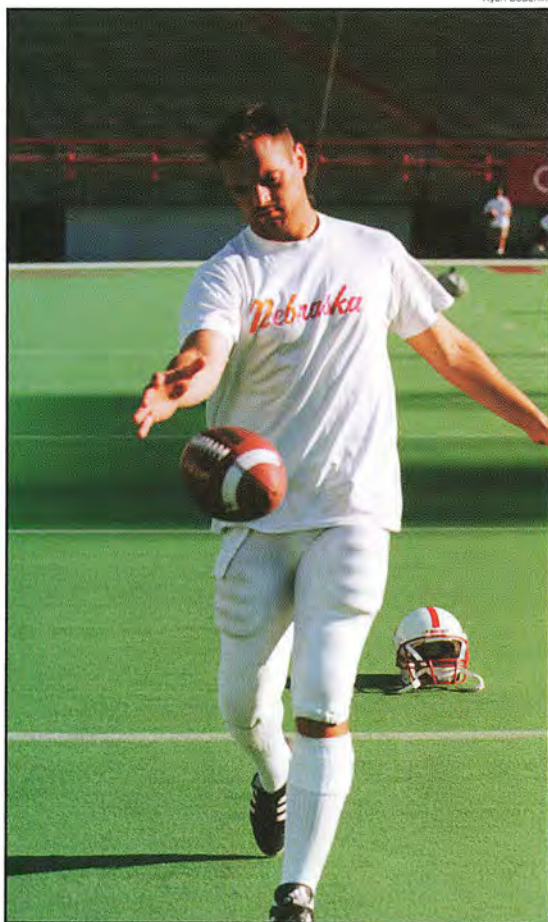
What they look at are kickers standing on the sideline during practice, watching, and maybe, on occasion, tossing a football to pass the time — but nothing all that strenuous, really.

Often the attitude is that there are football players and there are kickers.

"It kind of bothers me



Scott Bruhn



Ryan Soderlin

when people ask what position you play and you say punter or kicker, and they just go, 'Uh' or something like that," Lafleur said. "But you kind of have to smile because I can take a lot of guys I see on the street, play them in basketball or something like that and beat them.

"Kris and I take pride in being athletic. We're trying to get a little bit of a new perception, I guess, that kickers can be athletes, too. And I think that helps, just having that confidence."

Neither is a slouch. Lafleur is the most athletic punter in school history, based on his 2,077-point performance index score last spring. His point total was the highest-ever by a Nebraska punter.

He also set position records for vertical jump (35 inches) and the pro-agility run (:03.91).

Lafleur tied redshirt freshman quarterback Eric Crouch for the second-fastest time in the 10-yard dash in performance testing before the start of

however.

"I knew that the abilities I had as a kicker were probably greater than I would have had at any other position, so I just wanted to go to the best school, that had the best chance of winning and that provided as much support for its athletes as possible," Brown said. "Nebraska did that. I think more importantly, though, I just couldn't turn down the opportunity to play for Coach (Tom) Osborne."

Lafleur, who walked on, earned all-state honors as a quarterback at Norfolk (Catholic), Neb., which was the Class C state champion his junior year and the state runner-up his senior year.

He considered going to a small school where he could play quarterback or wide receiver in addition to punting, but "I knew if I went to play quarterback, I wasn't getting any offers from Division I type of schools, and I had always dreamed of playing Division I athletics," he said.

"So once Nebraska showed the

"Kris and I take pride in being athletic. We're trying to get a little bit of a new perception, I guess, that kickers can be athletes, too. And I think that helps, just having that confidence."

Bill Lafleur

two-a-day practices, running it in 1.55 seconds.

His personal best in the 40-yard dash, which isn't tested in the fall, is 4.71 seconds.

"I enjoy testing. You can get out there and when the results come back, people are like, 'Well, hey, who's this guy up here doing this?' You get a little respect," said Lafleur.

Both Brown and Lafleur were multi-sport athletes in high school.

Brown competed in basketball, baseball and track and field in addition to playing quarterback on the football team as a junior and senior at Southlake (Carroll), Texas.

Carroll High was the Class 3A state champion in football in 1992 and 1993 — defeating a Cuero High team in the state playoffs in 1993 that included Cornhusker safety Clint Finley.

Brown never considered playing quarterback at the collegiate level,

interest in me it did, that made the decision to come here pretty easy. I didn't want to look back 10 years from now and wonder if I could have made it here. This is such a great program. I think it's every kid's dream in this state to play for the Cornhuskers."

Both have been willing to step in at a position during practice. Lafleur filled in at quarterback on the scout team last season while Eric Crouch was recovering from surgery on an ankle and a knee.

"It was kind of fun working against your No. 1 defense, just to see what it's kind of like in a game situation," Lafleur said. "It really gives you respect for Division I quarterbacks. It gets rough, sometimes, when you've got the scout team going against the No. 1 defense. They get physical."

Scout team duty, regardless of the position, requires a good deal of athleticism.

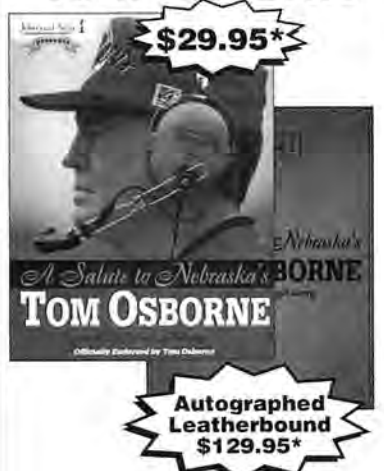
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"That's another thing a lot of people don't realize," said Lafleur. "There are a lot of guys around here who don't even play who do a lot to help our team get better. Those scout team guys, most of them are redshirting and they could come out and just loaf around, not block people.

"But you get guys who are really working. They're making the defense better. I think that's the reason we have the offense and defense we do because every day they practice against players who are the caliber that some teams would be happy with having them step on the field and play."

Brown and Lafleur were regulars at the voluntary workouts over the summer.

During the off-season, "we want to get out and work as hard as we possibly can because that's the time when a lot of our teammates can see the hard work we're putting in," Brown said. "They can see we're in the weight room; we're lifting every day; we're giving it everything we have.

"That's the attitude we've both taken since we've been here."

They have set an example for younger players, who see kickers working as hard as everyone else and realize that's what success demands. "I think everybody here works real hard," said Lafleur.

"If someone is giving 100-percent effort, it wouldn't be right for me to stand there and not give any effort at all or just kind of jog through it. If they can work hard, I can work hard. There's no reason Kris and I can't go over there and work hard, too. We're in good enough shape."

He and Brown are good enough athletes that they could be position players at smaller schools.

"We're not as good of athletes as other people on this team, obviously. But we're good enough where we can go out there and run a (pass) route and give some effort," Lafleur said.

"I think that helps. Guys can look at us and say: 'Well, everybody's working here.' You get the team, everybody's part of the team. There's no excuse for anybody to be working any less."

Because of that, there's no reason for people to look down on kickers. "We kind of get dogged a lot, that we don't work hard, that we're out of shape, all that stuff," said Lafleur.

He doesn't mind, as long as it comes from a teammate.

"We do what we can," he said. ■

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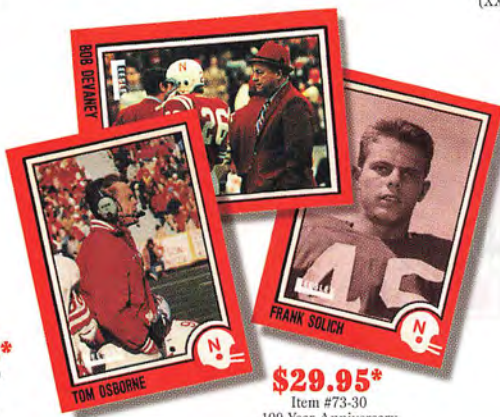
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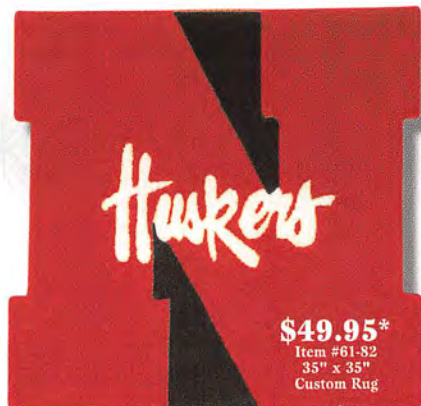
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**Mike
BABCOCK**

VETERAN SECONDARY coach George Darlington woke up at 4:45 a.m. on the Tuesday before Nebraska's opener against Louisiana Tech in the Eddie Robinson Classic.

He didn't get up. But he didn't go back to sleep, either, because he couldn't.

The alarm went off at 6 a.m., waking his wife, Sue. He told her he had already been awake for more than an hour.

"Well, it's game week," she said.

Darlington is in his 26th season as a Cornhusker assistant. But the nervous energy before that first game hasn't dissipated. "You always have some strange things happen," he said.

Even so, that didn't prepare him for the strange things that happened in Nebraska's 56-27 victory over the Bulldogs on Saturday. They exceeded his worst fears, in the form of 590 yards and four touchdowns passing.

He knew Louisiana Tech's passing attack was extraordinary. Still...

"The thing that is going to be helpful is if we can somehow win the game is that our preparation for the next, hopefully, 13 games is going to be greatly enhanced," he said beforehand.

Working against Nebraska's option offense in practice and then preparing for Louisiana Tech's passing, "you can't say you've seen it all," he said. "But you can pretty closely say you've seen it all."

"And that has great benefit for the kids down the road."

Darlington reiterated that point after the game, though with some hesitancy.

"If I say this, people will think I'm making an excuse," he said. "But this will be a tremendous help for the season. I believe that. It'll help because now it isn't a matter of looking at practice film."

The Cornhusker defensive backs have experienced the real thing.

Louisiana Tech quarterback Tim Rattay and wide receiver Troy Edwards put on the most prolific passing performance in Nebraska history — and in Edwards' case, in NCAA history.

Mike Brown, who was moved from rover to free safety for the game, was ready to apologize to the rest of the team on behalf of the secondary. The defensive backs were embarrassed, Brown said.

"They have a tremendous amount of pride," said Darlington. "It's a tough thing."

But they shouldn't be embarrassed, he said. "I don't feel embarrassed for them."

"I think they played hard. We have to do a little bit better job, obviously. But maybe we have to determine as coaches what things we can do to allow them to play better."

He tried to make that clear in the lockerroom immediately after the game.

"They had their heads down," he said. "And I said, 'Fellas, there's only one thing I'll ever ask you to do, and that's play as hard as you can and give it a great effort.' I said, 'You guys did that.'"

"That's all a coach can ever ask. If they start getting in a situation where they start placing the burden of the blame on themselves, that's not going to help them. Confidence is important."

Jon Waller



Nebraska would have liked to have had injured free safety Clint Finley in the lineup against pass-happy Louisiana Tech.

The first half appeared to be a confidence builder for the Nebraska defensive backs. Even though Rattay tested them by completing 21-of-33 passes, they allowed only 156 yards.

Edwards caught nine of the passes for 97 yards, an impressive total. But the Bulldogs were able to convert only one of the passes into a touchdown — and that came on a fourth down play.

The second half, however, quickly became a nightmare for the secondary,

which had to be restructured to compensate for starting free safety Clint Finley's being sidelined by a knee injury.

That's why Mike Brown was forced to move from rover, with Joe Walker, the No. 1 "nickel" back filling Brown's place and Khari Reynolds becoming the starting "nickel" back.

The play of the secondary probably wasn't quite as good as the numbers indicated in the first half, and it probably wasn't quite as bad as the numbers indicated in the second half, said Darlington.

"The fact that we gave up a humongous number of yards, obviously we need to work hard. And we will do that. But if they start getting back on their heels and all of a sudden the corners are down at the psych ward, (feeling as if) they're out there all by themselves and they get run by, we're in trouble."

The success of Rattay and Edwards won't be cause for wholesale changes. ■

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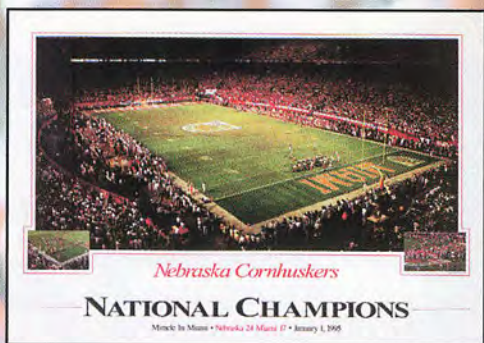
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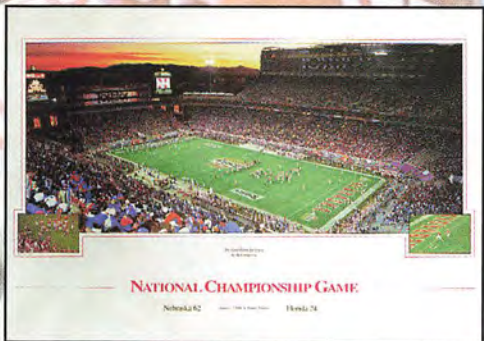
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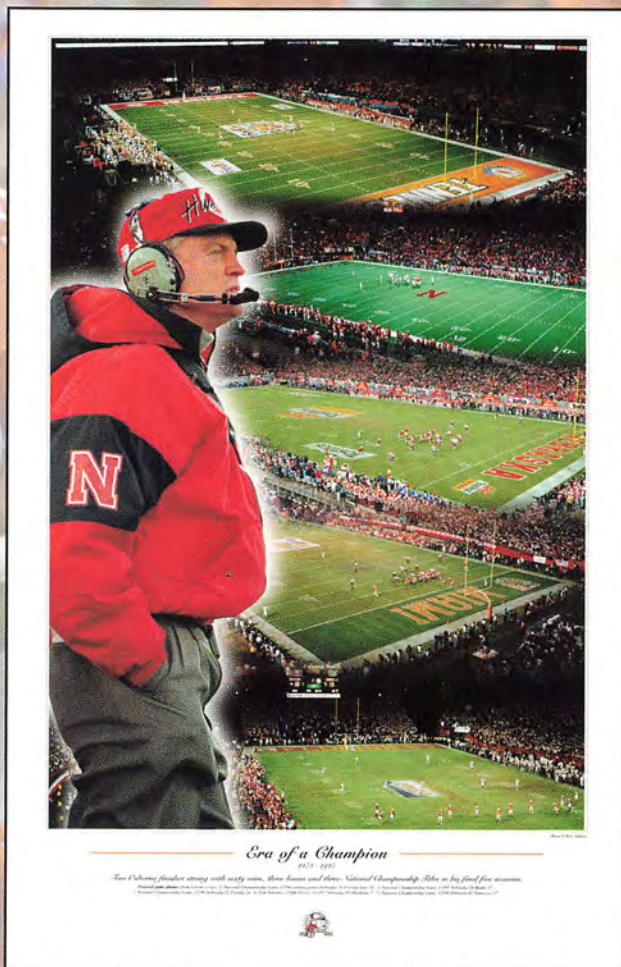
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